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ABSTRACT

This training manual, designed for teaching parents of young children with autism, contains nine modules on behavior modification techniques. The modules address: (1) the ABC's of behavior, which discusses discriminating among words that describe feelings and words that describe behaviors, identifying examples of learned behavior, and defining and identifying examples of antecedents, behaviors, and consequences; (2) teaching the child to follow directions, which discusses reasons children do not follow directions, ways to make difficult directions easier for children to follow, what to do when a child follows a direction and what to do when a child does not; (3) an introduction to reinforcement, which describes kinds of reinforcement and the necessity of catching a child being good; (4) how to use reinforcement with the child; (5) planning activities to increase appropriate behavior, which describes planning activities that are enjoyable and appropriate, anticipating problems during activities, and establishing reinforcement plans; (6) responding to undesirable behaviors and deciding which strategy to use; (7) deciding what to teach the child and breaking the skill down into steps; (8) teaching the child new skills and the hierarchy of prompts; and (9) encouraging the child to communicate. (CR)

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PARENT SKILL TRAINING

(TRAINER MODULES)

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THE LEAP OUTREACH PROJECT

Providing training & technical assistance
to meet the educational needs of young
children with autism since 1981.

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LEAP PRESCHOOL

STAFF SKILL TRAINING PROGRAM

MODULE #1: The ABC's of Behavior

Main Ideas

✏Definition of Behavior

✏Discrimination Between Words that Describe Feelings and Words that Describe Behaviors

✏Identification of Examples of Learned Behavior

✏Defining and Identifying Examples of Antecedents, Behaviors, and Consequences

DEFINING BEHAVIOR

Before we can talk about a child's behavior, we need to identify what we mean by the word "behavior." Here is a definition of behavior *(write on board).* Behavior refers to a specific action that a person does that can be observed. Just about everything we do can be described as a behavior. Turning the alarm clock off in the morning, brushing your teeth, making breakfast, and starting your car are examples of behaviors. Similarly with children, playing with toys, getting dressed eating breakfast, and talking are all examples of behavior.

FEELINGS VERSUS BEHAVIORS

(Write the full list of words on the board).

Good
Disruptive
Cooperative
Hyperactive
Aggressive

Often, when describing a child's behavior, we use words such as the ones listed above. For example, a teacher may speak of a student in her class and say, "she's very good," or a teacher may report to a parent that his son "can be very disruptive." The problem with these statements is that they do not tell use specifically what the child is doing. For example, when a parent says that her child is "usually good," what does that mean? It may mean that the child her child is "usually good," what does that mean? It may mean that the child puts her toys away when asked or that she eats everything on her plate. The same is true when a teacher tells a parent that his child can be "very disruptive." Again, what does this mean? It may mean that the child throws toys, makes loud noises, and runs around the room. On the other hand, it could mean that the child does not listen to the teacher and distracts his friends by making faces.

Words such as these listed above often mean different things to different people. For example, a child may behave the same way with two people, but each person may describe the child's behavior differently. One person may describe the child's behavior by saying "she's active but it's not a problem," while the other person may report that the child is "hyperactive and unmanageable." *(Write this word on the board).* Both of these descriptions communicate each person's feelings about the child's behavior, but they do not tell us what the child is actually doing.

Let's see if you can identify the difference between words that describe feeling and words that describe behavior: *Write the following words on the board one at a time and ask parents to identify which words describe behaviors that can be observed.*

Helpful
Cries
Sits Down
Lazy
Taps Pencil
Bad
Stubborn
Pleasant
Combs Hair
Yawns

describe feelings, is to be specific when you talk about the child's behavior. When we describe behaviors specifically, we can more clearly communicate what a child is actually doing. Listen to this exchange between a mother and her child's teacher. *(Refer parents to the* *Example Sheet* *in the Participant's Packet. If there is someone available, you may want to role play in this exchange.)*

Mother: "J.J.'s been very bad at home. Is he bad in the classroom?"
Teacher: "Oh, no. J.J. is usually good."
Mother: "Really? He's being good?"
Teacher: "Sure. Well, he's disruptive every once in a while, but not often."

How much do you feel you know about what J.J. is doing in the classroom? *(Allow time for answers).* This mother and teacher were using words that describe their feelings about J.J.'s behavior. It is difficult to get a clear picture of what is happening in the classroom. Now listen to an exchange between the same mother and teacher when they use words that describe behavior more specifically:

Mother: "J.J.'s been hitting his brother a lot at home. Does he hit the other children in the classroom?"

Teacher: "Well J.J. hit another child three times last week. But this week he hasn't hit anyone."

Mother: "Are there other behaviors you are worried about at school?"

Teacher: "Yes there is one more thing. He often screams 'No' and runs away from me when I ask him to clean up."

One other way to illustrate the difference between feelings and behaviors is to think about a person you feel is "nervous." We may not all agree that a person is "nervous." "Nervous" is a word that describes our feelings about a person's behavior. We usually, however, associate the word "nervous" with certain actions that we can observe -- for instance, nail biting, pacing the floor, or wringing hands. These activities represent behaviors we can observe and agree upon.

Let's see if we can change some words that describe feelings into words that describe specific behaviors. Listen to this sentence: "Jeffrey is the class clown." You could restate this, describing specific behaviors by saying, "Jeffrey tells jokes during class and makes faces to distract other children."

Here is another sentence which reflects someone's feelings about a child's behavior: "Tanya is a little angel." Can you restate this sentence into a specific statement that describes a behavior? (*Give parents time to answer. Possible answers may include "Tanya plays quietly and cleans up her toys when she is finished," or "Tanya shares her toys with her little brother."*)

It will be helpful when you talk to students' parents or other teachers and professionals to clearly describe the behaviors you would like to discuss. Also, if someone is reporting to you about something a child has done and is unclear or not specific enough, ask them to clarify what they are describing.

LEARNED BEHAVIOR

Listen to this following list of words:

blinking
using a spoon
talking
sneezing
shivering
dressing
breathing
driving a car
coughing
making a telephone call

These words are all examples of behaviors -- actions that can be observed. However, some of these are reflexes, or behaviors that our bodies do naturally, and some are behaviors that we learn at some time in our lives.

Most of the behaviors that we do each day are learned behaviors. Examples of learned behaviors that you may have done today include shutting off your alarm clock, getting out of bed, brushing your teeth, and having a cup of coffee. Your child also has probably demonstrated many learned behaviors today. These might include: playing with toys, eating breakfast, taking coats off, and watching TV. *(Read through the list of words again and have parents indicate if the behavior is a reflex or a learned behavior:*)

blinking
using a spoon
talking
sneezing
shivering
dressing
breathing
driving
coughing
making a telephone call

LEARNING SOCIAL BEHAVIORS

Just as children learn how to color, put together puzzles, and count, they also learn a variety of social behaviors. They learn behaviors such as how to walk quietly in a supermarket, how to share toys, and how to say "please" and "thank you." Children also learn many undesirable behaviors, such as whining, hitting, and not doing what is asked of them. When we say that a child has learned these behaviors this does not mean that someone intentionally taught the child an undesirable behavior. What it does mean is that situations that occur before and after a behavior may, without our realizing it, have an effect on whether or not the child continues the behavior in the future.

HOW BEHAVIORS ARE LEARNED: ANTECEDENTS

If we say that children learn the majority of their behaviors, you may be wondering how all this learning occurs. When children are very young, much learning occurs through observations and interactions with parents. For example, many toddlers learn to say "bye-bye" by hearing their parents say "goodbye" when someone is leaving. The parents will also encourage the child by saying, "Say bye-bye."

In this example, saying "bye-bye" does not occur by itself. It happens in response to a specific situation -- typically, when someone is leaving and the parent tells the child to say "bye-bye." Rarely do you hear a toddler just randomly saying "bye-bye." This is true for all behaviors. They occur in response to a situation.

(Write the word 'antecedent' on the board). This word, antecedent, is used to refer to the situation that comes before a behavior. An antecedent can be any object, person, or event in the environment that cues a person to do something. For example, the antecedent to a child dressing himself may be having his clothes put out where he can reach them. Or, the antecedent to a child signing for "cookie" may be the parent asking the child if she wants a cookie. Two antecedents for going grocery shopping may be an absence of certain food items and having some form of payment for purchases.

Because they will often cue a particular behavior, antecedents play an important role in determining behaviors. Antecedents set the stage for a behavior to occur. For example, if a child has been told he cannot have a cookie, he is less likely to "sneak" a cookie if the parent is standing in the kitchen. This behavior would be more likely to happen if the parent was out of the room. In this example, the parent's absence would be the antecedent to cue the behavior of taking a cookie. Similarly, a person is not likely to drive through a red light if the car following her happens to be a police car. If however, the antecedent is that it is late at night and there are no other cars in sight, this may be a cue to drive through the red light. *(Read statements 3 through 5 on the Example Sheet, one at a time. Ask parents to identify the* *antecedent of the behavior in each statement. Review the definitions for both antecedent and behavior if needed.)*

1. Becky begins to cry when Greg takes her toy.
   Antecedent: Greg takes Becky's toy.
   Behavior: Becky cries.

2. Robert throws his toys around the room when his mother talks on the telephone.
   Antecedent: Mother talks on the telephone.
   Behavior: Robert throws his toys.

3. Dennis gives his father a hug when he gets home from work.
   Antecedent: Father gets home from work.
   Behavior: Dennis gives father a hug.

HOW BEHAVIORS ARE LEARNED: CONSEQUENCES

(Write the word "consequence" on the board). In addition to antecedents, what occurs after a behavior is very important. The word consequence refers to what happens immediately after the behavior. Some consequences happen naturally like getting burned if you touch a hot stove or slipping when you walk on ice.

Sometimes a person responds to a behavior in a certain way. These consequences are learned responses. At some time in our lives we learned how to respond in these ways, whether through imitation or direct instruction. A child in school raises his hand and the teacher calls on him. A child forgets to clean up her toys and her teacher scolds her. Your mother comes for a visit and you give her a hug. Someone says "Hello" to you and you shake his hand.

A behavior may also be followed by a consequence that has been planned by another person. For example, a father gives his son an M&M each time he uses the potty or a policeman gives a ticket to someone that is speeding. In other words someone plans a certain consequence in an attempt to have an effect on whether the behavior continues.

Let's try to determine what both the antecedents and the consequences are in each of the situations on the Activity Sheet in the Participant's Packet. Read each statement from Section 1 of the Activity Sheet. *(Ask parents to identify the antecedent and consequence for each behavior. Review definitions if needed.)*

a) Jennifer cries when her mother puts her in bed. She insists on sleeping with her mother. Her mother is exhausted and does not feel like listening to her scream for an hour. She lets Jennifer sleep with her.

Antecedent: Mother puts Jennifer to bed.
Behavior: Jennifer cries.
Consequence: Mother lets Jennifer sleep with her.)

b) Mrs. Jones is trying to toilet train her two year old daughter, Tamara. She sits Tamara down on the potty chair and says, "Go potty." After a few minutes, Tamara urinates in the potty. Mrs. Jones kisses Tamara and says, "That's a good girl, you went potty."

Antecedent: *Mrs. Jones sits Tamara on the potty.*
Behavior: *Tamara urinates in the potty.*
Consequence: *Mrs. Jones kisses and praises Tamara.*

c) In the grocery store, Bryan asks his father to buy him a toy. His father says no. Bryan begins to cry. His father ignores his crying, pays for his groceries and takes Bryan out of the store.

Antecedent: *Father says "NO".*
Behavior: *Bryan cries.*
Consequence: *Father ignores Bryan's crying.*

This important sequence of events -- antecedent, behavior, consequence -- can be shortened to the "ABC's of behavior." It is through this chain of events that children learn. Looking at this chain of events will help us determine what will happen with a specific behavior in the future.

USING CONSEQUENCES TO PREDICT BEHAVIOR

The type of consequence that follows a behavior will determine if the behavior will occur more frequently or less frequently in the future. Consequences can therefore be use to predict the future occurrence of a behavior. In general, consequences that are pleasant or rewarding result in the behavior occurring more often, while consequences that are unpleasant or punishing result in the behavior occurring less frequently.

Review the antecedents, behaviors, and consequences for the previous examples on the Activity Sheet. *(Ask the parents to a) determine whether or* *not the consequence of the behavior is pleasant or unpleasant, and b) make a prediction about the future occurrence of the behavior.)*

Example A: Antecedent: Mother puts Jennifer to bed.

Behavior: Jennifer cries.

Consequence: Mother lets Jennifer sleep with her.

Type of Consequence: Pleasant and rewarding.

Prediction: Behavior will occur more often.

Example B: Antecedent: Mrs. Jones sits Tamara on the potty.

Behavior: Tamara urinates on the potty.

Consequence: Mrs. Jones kisses and praises Tamara.

Type of Consequence: Pleasant and rewarding.

Prediction: Behavior will occur more often.

Example C: Antecedent: Father says "No."

Behavior: Brian cries.

Consequence: Father ignores Bryan's crying.

Type of Consequence: Unpleasant or punishing.

Prediction: Behavior will occur less frequently.

Although this seems simple with these examples, it is sometimes difficult to break a behavior down in this way. It is especially difficult if it is unclear what the antecedent to a behavior is or if you are not sure if the consequence is pleasant or unpleasant to the child. If you want to try to change a child's behavior, however, you will be more successful if you carefully observe the child and try to determine the current antecedents and consequences. With careful observation you may find that there is a way to change the antecedent or to plan consequences to influence the child's behaviors that you would like to change. In future sessions, we'll talk about planning ways to reward behaviors that you would like the child to do more often and how to respond to behaviors you would like the child to do less often.

BRINGING IT HOME

Refer parents to the "Bringing it Home" handout in the Participant's Packet. Go over the directions and discuss responses of those parents that wish to share the information.

SUMMARY

Summarize the session by reviewing the following:

a) A behavior is a specific action that can be observed. When teachers are specific in describing their child's behavior, more than one person can observe and agree upon the behavior.

b) Words such as "good" or "disruptive" reflect our feelings about a behavior; they do not tell us specifically what the child does.

b) Words such as "good" or "disruptive" reflect our feelings about a behavior; they do not tell us specifically what the child does.

c) Being specific about a child's behavior helps parents and teachers communicate more effectively.

d) Most behaviors that we engage in each day are learned behaviors.

e) Learned behaviors can be analyzed by looking at antecedents and consequences. Both antecedents and consequences play important roles in determining whether or not a behavior will occur.

f) Rewarding or pleasant consequences result in an increase in the frequency of the behavior. Punishing or unpleasant consequences result in a decrease in the frequency of the behavior.

IN A NUTSHELL

Refer parents to the "In a Nutshell" handout in the Participant's Packet. Suggest to the parents that they read over the handout as an additional review and that they share the information with family members, other caregivers, and interested friends.

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

Example Sheet

1.	Mother:	"J.J.'s been very bad at home. Is he bad in the classroom?"
	Teacher:	"Oh no, J.J. is usually good."
	Mother:	"Really? He's being good?"
	Teacher:	"Sure. Well, he's disruptive every once in awhile, but not very often."
2.	Mother:	"J.J.'s been hitting his brother a lot at home. Does he hit the other children in the classroom?"
	Teacher:	"Well, J.J. hit another child three times last week. But this week he hasn't hit anyone."
	Mother:	"Are there other behaviors you are worried about at school?"
	Teacher:	"Yes, there is one more thing. J.J. often screams "No" and runs away from me when I ask him to clean up."

3. Becky begins to cry when Greg takes her toy.
Antecedent:______________________________
Behavior: Becky cries.

4. Roberto throws his toys around the room when his mother talks on the telephone.
Antecedent:______________________________
Behavior: Roberto throws his toys.

5. Dennis gives his father a hug when he gets home from work.
Antecedent:______________________________
Behavior: Dennis gives father a hug.

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

Activity Sheet

SECTION I: Read each statement and identify the antecedent and consequence for each behavior.

Jennifer cries when her mother puts her in bed. She insists on sleeping with her mother. Her mother is exhausted and does not feel like listening to her scream for an hour. She allows Jennifer to sleep with her	Mrs. Jones is trying to toilet train her tow year old daughter, Tamara. She sits Tamara down on the potty chair and says, "Go potty." Tamara urinates in the potty. Mrs. Jones kisses Tamara and says, "That's a good girl, you went potty."	In the grocery store, Bryan asks his father to buy him a toy. His father says, "No." Bryan begins to cry. His father ignores his crying, pays for this groceries and takes Bryan out of the store.
Antecedent:	Antecedent:	Antecedent:
Behavior: Jennifer cries	Behavior: Tamara urinates in the potty.	Behaviors: Bryan cries
Consequence: ______________	Consequence: ______________	Consequence: ______________

SECTION II: Determine whether the consequence is pleasant or unpleasant and make a prediction about the future occurrence of the behavior.

Type of Consequence: ______________________ ______________________	Type of Consequence: __________________ __________________	Type of Consequence ____________________ ____________________
Prediction: ______________________ ______________________	Prediction: __________________ __________________	Prediction: ____________________ ____________________

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

Bringing It Home

Fill in the following information:

1. Think of an example of one of the child's desirable behaviors. Identify the following:

Antecedent: ______________________________

Behavior: ______________________________

Consequence: ______________________________

Type of Consequence: ______________________________

Prediction: ______________________________

2. Think of an example of one of your child's undesirable behaviors. Identify the following:

Antecedent: ______________________________

Behavior: ______________________________

Consequence: ______________________________

Type of Consequence: ______________________________
Prediction: ______________________________

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

In A Nutshell

1. A behavior is a specific action that a child does that you can observe.
2. When you are specific when talking about your child's behavior, it helps you to:

a) clearly communicate to others what the child is actually doing;

b) have more than one person agree upon the child's behavior; and

c) observe the behavior without your feelings interfering.

3. Words such as "good" or "disruptive" reflect our feelings about a child's behavior; they do not tell us specifically what the child does.

4. Behaviors can be grouped into two categories -- those that we do naturally such as blinking, sneezing and shivering; and those that we have learned to do at some time in our life such as dressing, talking, or driving a car.

5. Most of children's behaviors are learned. Children learn social behaviors primarily through their interactions with adults and other children.

6. Behavior can be analyzed by looking at the following:

Antecedent - the situation that comes before the behavior

Behavior - the actual behavior that is observed

Consequence - what happens immediately following the behavior

(This process can be shortened to A-B-C for easy remembering.)

7. The following examples illustrate the A-B-C process:

a) **At approximately midnight, Robbie gets out of bed and goes into the bathroom. Finding his mother's makeup case, Robbie "paints" the walls with lipstick. Hearing a noise, Robbie's mother enters the bathroom and is horrified by the mess. She scolds Robbie and sends back to bed.**

Antecedent: Parents asleep, Robbie awake, makeup available.
Behavior: Painting walls with lipstick.
Consequence: Scolding, sent back to bed.

b) Maria is playing with a dollhouse on the floor. Carlos, her brother, comes over and they play with the dollhouse together. Their mom notices that they are sharing the toy and not fighting. She comes over and says to the kids, "You two are playing nicely together."

Antecedent: Maria is playing with the dollhouse.
Behavior: Maria and Carlos sharing the toy.
Consequence: Mother praises Maria and Carlos.

8. Antecedents are important in determining if a behavior will occur. For example, laying your child's clothes out for him in the morning may be an antecedent for him to get dressed. For adults, the seat belt buzzer in the car is often an antecedent to buckle your seat belt. Antecedents set the stage for a behavior to occur.

9. Consequences often play the important role of strengthening or weakening the behaviors they follow. Rewarding or pleasant consequences result in the behavior happening more often. A special snack following a time when a child played and shared his toys with another child is likely to increase this type of playing. Smiles, hugs, and praise for following parent directions are likely to result in a child continuing to follow directions. Punishing or unpleasant consequences result in a behavior happening less often. Ignoring a child when he tantrums may result in fewer tantrums. Making a child go in the house because he ran into the street may result in the child staying out of the street when he plays outside in the future.

LEAP PRESCHOOL

STAFF SKILL TRAINING PROGRAM

MODULE #2: Teaching Children to Follow Directions

Main Ideas

- Reasons Children do not Follow Directions
- **Ways to Make Difficult Directions Easier for Children to Follow**
- How to Give Directions that are Clear and Specific
- What to do When a Child Follows a Direction
- What to do When a Child does not Follow a Direction

INTRODUCTION

Listening, understanding, and following directions are important skills for children to learn. Young children learn these skills through their interactions with their parents and other important people in their lives. Although children typically try to please people by doing what is asked of them, they will also, at times, test their limits by not following directions. Children may be trying to find a balance between pleasing the adults they interact with and asserting their own independence. The way the adult responds will affect how well the child follows directions in the future. Today we are going to discuss why some children may not follow directions and some ways to teach children to follow more directions.

WHY WON'T MY CHILD LISTEN TO ME?

When your child doesn't follow your direction you may feel frustrated or angry. You may think "Why won't she listen to me?" You may try many other ways to get your child to follow your direction. Let's look at a few examples that will illustrate the reasons why children don't follow directions. (*Refer parents to the Activity Sheet in the Participant's Packet. Write the heading "Why won't my child listen to me" on the board.)* Read the first example on your Activity Sheet. *(Give time to read.)*

> *Melanie wanted her daughter to set the table for dinner. She said "Megan, how about if you get the blue plates with the little flowers and the silverware and all the napkins, and put them on the table at everyone's place". Megan looked very confused and didn't even begin to follow the direction.*

Why did Megan not follow this direction? *(Possible response: "She didn't understand the direction.)* Sometimes children don't follow a direction because they do not understand what it means. *(List "1. Doesn't understand direction" on board.)* The direction may be too complicated or too vague. It may not be clear if the child has a choice of whether or not to follow the direction. Some children also have a difficult time remembering a direction that is given too far ahead of when the direction is to be followed. How many of you remember giving your child a direction when you were getting them dressed or tying a shoe? It's possible that when you finished with what you are doing, your child no longer remembered what was asked. A direction such as "Don't forget to put the toys away when you are done eating dinner" may be difficult for a preschool child to remember. Now look at example number two on the Activity Sheet. *(Give time to read.)*

> *Kristina was watching her favorite TV show. Her mother called from the kitchen and said "Kristina, pick up your toys." Kristina didn't even turn her head when her name was called.*

Why did Kristina not follow her mother's directions? Another reason that a child may not follow a direction is that she doesn't hear what was said. *(List "2. Doesn't hear direction" on the board.)* She may not have been paying attention to her mother or her mother was too far away for her to hear. You can probably remember hearing your name called in school when you weren't paying attention and hadn't heard the question. Children can get so wrapped up in a game, video, song, book or their own thoughts that they tune others out. Let's look at at another reason children don't follow directions in example number three on your Activity Sheet. *(Give time to read.)*

> *Alex and his father, Arnold were having a wonderful time playing at the park. After about an hour, Arnold said "OK Alex, its time to go home. Come to the car". Alex sat down on the ground and began to cry.*

Can anyone tell us why Alex didn't follow the directions to come to the car? A third reason that children may not follow directions is that they don't want to do it. *(List "3. Doesn't want to follow direction" on the board.)* If they cry, ignore the direction, or begin to do something else, they may get out of doing something they really don't enjoy. Another common example of this is when a parent tells a child to go to bed. It is difficult for a child to leave favorite activities and toys that are so rewarding to go to bed, so the child may think up several excuses (a drink of water, 15 more minutes of a TV show, or another story) or simply ignore the direction. Read the final example from the

Activity Sheet. *(Give time to read.)*

> *Rob was reading the newspaper while his son, Joseph, was playing nearby. After a short while, Joseph began to sneak up the stairs. Rob said "Joseph, please stay downstairs." Joseph giggled and ran up the stairs. Rob said, "OK, now I'm going to get you," and chased after him. By the time their chasing game was over, both Rob and Joseph were laughing.*

Why didn't Rob follow the direction? Sometimes children don't follow directions in order to get extra attention. *(List "4. To get extra attention" on the board.)* Often, when a child doesn't follow a direction, the teacher will repeat it, give additional assistance or turn it into a game. This attention can be very reinforcing and the child may try to get the same attention when the parent can't or doesn't really want to play that game any longer. Another way a parent may respond when a child refuses to follow a direction is to yell, threaten, or engage in a discussion with the child. Even though this attention seems unpleasant, children may not follow a direction to continue to get this type of attention. Children may also anticipate receiving this extra attention because that is something that has happened in the past.

(Summarize this section by reviewing the information on the board. This includes: "Why won't my child listen to me?")

A. Doesn't understand direction.
B. Doesn't hear direction.
C. Doesn't want to follow direction.
D. To get extra attention.

HOW TO GIVE A DIRECTION

Many times the way you state a direction can give a child a better chance of successfully following it. If your child hears and completely understands, she is more likely to do what you have asked. However, if your child does not understand the direction, for whatever reason, she will not be able to follow it. Making sure the direction is clear, specific, and within the child's ability will make it more likely that the direction will be followed. *(Write the heading, "How to Give a Direction" on the board.)* We'll be referring back to the examples from the Activity Sheet to discuss how we can make these directions clearer and simpler. Read example number one again. *(Give time to read.)*

> *Melanie wanted her daughter to set the table for dinner. She said "Megan, how about if you get the blue plates with the little flowers and the silverware and all the napkins, and put them on the table at everyone's place". Megan looked very confused and didn't even begin to follow the direction.*

This is a very complex multi-step direction. There are several ways that Melanie could simplify this direction. One thing Melanie could do is to give one direction at a time. (*List "1. Give one at a time" on the board.)* Can anyone restate part of this direction giving just one direction at a time. *(Possible response: "Get the plates." Then wait. "Put them at the table at each place. Then wait. "Get the napkins," etc.)* Giving your child too many directions at one time can be confusing for him and can reduce the chance that he will follow the direction. Initially, it is better to give one at a time. When you fell that your child is able to follow one step directions, you can begin to give more complex, multi-step directions such as "Get the plates and napkins."

Children may have a hard time following a direction that is too long or complicated. Giving short, simple directions is important for children that are just learning to follow directions. *(List "2. Give short, simple directions" on the board.)* Instead of saying, "Ok now, Caitlin, be a big girl now and try real hard to pull up your pants", you can say "Caitlin, pull up your pants." This shorter sentence is easier for Caitlin to understand. She doesn't need to sort out which words actually go with what she is being asked to do. Extra words such as "OK, now", "How about if.." or "It would be really nice if you..." make a simple direction more difficult for a child to follow.

Another guideline for giving clear, simple directions is to be specific. *(List "3. Be specific." on the board.)* Tell your child exactly what you want him to do. Specify the desired behavior in your instructions. If your child is throwing food on the floor and you say "Johnny", you have not told him what to do. If you say "stop it" it may temporarily stop the behavior, but he may still not know what you want him to do. If what you mean is "Johnny, keep your food on your plate" then you need to tell him so. Directions such as "be good", "stop", or "calm down" may be too vague for a child. They do not specifically tell a child what you want him to do.

Now look at example number 2 on the Activity Sheet. *(Give time to read.)*

> ***Kristina was watching her favorite TV show. Her mother called from the kitchen and said "Kristina, pick up your toys." Kristina didn't even turn her head when her name was called.***

What could Kristina's mom do to make it more likely that Kristina would follow the direction? *(Possible response: she could make sure Kristina is listening to her before she gives the direction).* It is important to make sure that your child is paying attention to you when you give a direction. (*List "4. Make sure your child is paying attention" on the board.)* Remember that children can "tune out" parents. Before you give a direction, get your child's attention. Look at your child, make sure you are close to her, get down to her level, and say her name. You may need to eliminate some things that are distracting. Turn off the TV, take her aside from a group of children or get between her and the toy she is playing with. You may also need to stop some distracting behaviors before you give your child a direction. If the child is running around, tantrumming, throwing toys or doing some repetitive verbal or motor behavior, you may need to calm her or interrupt the behavior to be sure you have her attention. To do this, you could hold her on your lap or rest your hand on her shoulder.

It is also important to, whenever possible, state your direction in positive terms. *(List "5. State it positively" on the board.)* In other words, emphasize the positive behavior rather than the negative behavior when giving your child a direction. Saying "don't" or "no" only teaches your child what not to do; it does not tell your child what you want him to do. Stating instructions positively will help teach your child the correct behavior. For example, instead of saying "don't run", you can tell your child to "remember to walk," or instead of saying "stop screaming" you can say "play quietly."

Remember that you can give extra assistance, if necessary. (*List "6. Give extra assistance if needed " on the board.)* Directions are much easier for children to follow if they are accompanied by gestures or other prompts. If you tell a child to put his coat on, you could point to his coat, gently guide him toward it, give the sign language for coat or show him a picture of a coat to make sure he understands what you are asking. It is common for parents to tap or point to a chair when they ask their child to sit down. When a child is beginning to learn a complex task such as scooping food with a spoon, the parent can give the direction as he helps by guiding the spoon with his hand. Assistance given with a direction can be in many forms.

The final guideline for giving a direction to your child is that you tell the child what you want him to do rather than asking or suggesting. (*List "7. Tell, don't ask" on the board.)* Listen to these statements:

"You could hang up your coat." *"Can you ask for more milk?"*
"Let's see if you can sit still."

These statements can be confusing to a child because it is not clear whether it is a direction that he must follow, or a "suggestion." Sometimes it is OK to give a "suggestion" to your child; it's part of a natural conversation. However, when your child does not have a choice of whether to follow the direction, a short, simple direction without extra words like "can you.." or "let's see if..." will be less confusing.

(Summarize this section by reviewing the list that is on the board, "How to Give a Direction:")

1. *Give one direction at a time.*
2. *Give short, simple directions.*
3. *Be specific.*
4. *Make sure your child is paying attention.*
5. *State it positively.*
6. *Give extra assistance.*
7. *Tell, don't ask*

REDUCING THE NUMBER OF DIRECTIONS YOU GIVE

(Refer parents to example number one on the Example Sheet in the Participant's Packet.) Listen to this example:

> *Nicholas and his mother, Annie were playing with blocks. Annie gave the following directions within the first two minutes of play:*
>
> *"Give me the red block"*
> *"Put this block on top of your tower."*
> *"Let's build a gas station."*
> *"Go get a car."*

> *"Put the little man in the car."*
> *"Bring the car to the gas station."*
> *"Don't knock down my tower."*

One thing to remember about giving directions to children is to give directions only when necessary. Be careful not to give a large number of instructions in a short time period. This may frustrate or be stressful to a child. Reducing the number of directions you give does not mean you need to talk or interact with your child less frequently. You can replace the time spent giving directions with talking about what your child is doing, or commenting on things you see. This is a great method of language enrichment for your child.

Another way to reduce the number of directions you give to your child is to offer choices. During play you may say, "Would you like to color with crayons or markers?" While dressing, the child can be given the choice of a red or blue shirt. Giving choices helps the parent guide the child in what to do while giving the child some control over the situation. Can anyone give an example of how Annie in the previous example could have given Nicholas some choices while playing with the blocks? (*Possible responses: "Would you like the green or the red block?" "What would you like to build?" or "Do you want to knock down this tower?"*) As we discussed earlier, suggestions are another way to offer children choices. Instead of a direction such as "Turn off the TV", you could give the suggestion "If you want to, you could turn off the TV." Stating this as a suggestion, however, implies that if he chooses, he can leave the TV on. When your child does have a choice, be very clear about it. "If you want to...." or "Would you like to..." statements clearly give the child a choice. On the other hand, if he has no choice, be sure to state it as a clear direction.

You may also be able to give fewer directions if you redirect the child to a new activity rather that giving a direction. (*Refer parents to example Two on the Example Sheet.)* Here's an example:

> *Casey was spinning a metal lid on the kitchen floor, This behavior was beginning to annoy his mother and she wanted it to stop. She knew, however, that if she told him to stop and removed the lid that he would cry and tantrum for a long time. Instead, she got out his favorite toy musical instruments and placed them on the floor near him. When Casey began to play with them, his mother removed the lid and placed it out of reach.*

In this example, Casey's mother never needed to give a direction. She avoided a tantrum and made the situation easier to handle. Redirection is a strategy that can work in a number of situations. The key is to make the new activity or object more fun than what the child is currently doing.

DIRECTIONS THAT ARE DIFFICULT FOR CHILDREN

The most difficult directions for children to follow may be to end an activity that is very enjoyable or to begin an activity that they really don't like. Many children will cry, sit on the ground, tantrum, or simply ignore a direction that they don't want to follow. An illustration of this is the difficulty children have leaving a park or a playground, as in the previous example. There are some ways to make this type of situation a little easier and more positive. The first thing to think about is how you can make the direction or the transition from one activity to another more fun. The transition from the park to home may be a lot more fun for Alex if there was a stop at the ice cream store in between. Can anyone think of another way Alex's father could make the direction to go to the car more fun? (*Possible responses: Do somersaults to the car, ride on father's shoulders to the car, have a favorite toy or snack in the car).*

When you anticipate a difficult direction or transition, tell the child ahead of time what is going to happen. Simply letting a child know that there are just five more minutes before you'll have to leave, or that it's bedtime as soon as a certain TV program is over makes it easier for a child to be ready when you do give the direction.

Your child may also be more willing to follow a direction if you wait until she finishes or has had some time to enjoy the activity she is involved in. You may not always be able to wait to give an important direction or to allow your child as much time as she wants at a certain activity. However, if the child is very intent on an activity or has just become interested in a certain toy, it may be best to wait a few minutes before giving a direction.

AFTER THE DIRECTION IS GIVEN

When you give a child a direction, two things can happen. He follows your direction (or at least tries to) or he doesn't follow your direction. Either way, you have to be ready to respond. (*Refer parents to example three on the example sheet.*) Listen to this example:

> *Paula said, "Jeremy, please put your clothes in the hamper." Jeremy immediately stood up, picked up his clothes, and put them in the hamper.*

How should Paula respond? *(Possible response: Praise or hug Jeremy).* Paula should reward Jeremy for following the direction. It is important to reward children for following directions. Whenever a child follows a direction or tries to follow it, let him know that you are pleased. Praise, a hug, or a smile will teach the child that following your directions is something that he should continue to do to get positive attention from you.

To give a child the best chance to get that positive attention, be sure that you have given the child plenty of time to follow a direction. For preschool children, this means to wait at least 5 seconds after you give a direction before you expect the child to begin to respond.

Now, what if Jeremy, in the previous example, didn't follow the direction? It is important to be ready with a consistent response. One important thing to remember is to not repeat your direction. Repeating the same direction several times may teach the child that he doesn't have to do it the first time. If your child does not follow the direction the first time, gently guide him to complete what you asked. Physical guidance means that you put your hand on your child's hand and help him follow your direction. Use only the amount of guidance needed for the child to complete the direction. Physical guidance can be just a "nudge" to the hand or arm or can be full, hand-over-hand assistance. This physical guidance works in several ways. If your child does not want to follow a direction, he learns that he needs to do what you ask. If he wants the extra attention of repeated directions or verbal discussion, you will help him do it without the extra attention. One way or another it will end up that he has followed the direction. Finally, if your child did not hear the direction or didn't understand what you asked, the physical guidance will teach your child what words were said and what they mean. You don't really have to think too hard about why your child didn't follow a particular direction because the physical guidance will be a good consequence either way.

CONCLUSION

One of the most important things to remember when teaching children to follow directions is to "pick your battles." It is important to consistently follow through on a few, very important directions than to struggle with the child on many minor issues. If you have decided a "direction" is not important, make sure you choose your words carefully, giving suggestions or descriptions of what the child is doing. When it is important that the child follow a direction, such as staying in the yard, or coming when you call, follow the guidelines that have been mentioned in this packet. Stop before you give a direction and ask yourself, "Is it important and am I willing and able to follow through?"

BRINGING IT HOME

Refer parents to the "Bringing it Home" handout in the Participant's Packet. Go over the directions and discuss responses of those parents that wish to share the information.

SUMMARY

Summarize the session by reviewing the following.

1. Children may not follow direction if:
    a. they don't understand what it means
    b. they don't hear it
    c. they don't want to do it, or
    d. they expect extra attention

2. Some guidelines for giving directions to young children are:
    a. give one at a time
    b. give short, simple directions
    c. be specific
    d. state it positively
    e. make sure the child is paying attention
    f. give extra assistance, if necessary, and
    g. tell, don't ask

3. It is important to try to not to give too many directions to young children.

4. Directions to end a fun activity or begin an activity that a child dislikes are difficult directions for children to follow. Try to make the directions easier and more fun.

3. It is important to try to not to give too many directions to young children.

4. Directions to end a fun activity or begin an activity that a child dislikes are difficult directions for children to follow. Try to make the directions easier and more fun.

5. Give your child plenty of time to follow a direction and praise him when he does. If the child does not follow a direction, do not repeat it. Instead, physically guide him to complete it.

6. And remember, "pick your battles". Give directions that are important to you and that you are willing to follow through on.

IN A NUTSHELL

Refer parents to the "In a Nutshell" handout. Suggest to parents that they read over the handout as an additional review and that they share the information with family members, other caregivers and interested friends. There is an extra page to the "In a Nutshell" handout for this session with some simple reminders for giving directions. Parents may want to keep this page handy or post it somewhere in their home to refer to daily.

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET
Activity Sheet

Answer the questions following each example:

1. Melanie wanted her daughter Megan to set the table for dinner. She said, "Megan, how about if you get the blue plates with the little flowers and the silverware and all the napkins, and put them on the table at everyone's place." Megan looked very confused and didn't even begin to follow the direction.

Why did Megan not follow this direction?________________________________

2. Kristina was watching her favorite TV show. Her mother called from the kitchen and said, "Kristina, pick up your toys." Kristina didn't even turn her head when her name was called.

Why did Kristina not follow this direction?________________________________

3. Alex and his father Arnold were having a wonderful time playing at the park. After about an hour, Arnold said "OK, Alex, it's time to go home. Come to the car." Alex sat down on the ground and began to cry.

Why did Alex not follow this direction?________________________________

4. Rob was reading the newspaper while his son, Joseph was playing nearby. After a short while, Joseph began to sneak up the stairs. Rob said, "Joseph, please stay downstairs." Joseph giggled and ran up the stairs. Rob said, "OK, now I'm going to get you," and chased after him. By the time their chasing game was over, both Rob and Joseph were laughing.

Why did Joseph not follow this direction?________________________________

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

Example Sheet

1. Nicholas and his mother, Annie were playing with blocks. Annie gave the following directions within the first two minutes of play:

   "Give me a red block."
   "Put this block on top of your tower."
   "Let's build a gas station."
   "Go get a car."
   "Put the little man in the car."
   "Bring the car to the gas station."
   "Don't knock down my tower."

2. Casey was spinning a metal lid on the kitchen floor. This behavior was beginning to annoy his mother and she wanted it to stop. She knew, however, that if she told him to stop and removed the lid that he would cry and tantrum for a long time. Instead, she got out his favorite toy musical instruments and placed them on the floor near him. When Casey began to play with them, his mother removed the lid and placed it out of reach.

3. Paula said, "Jeremy, please put your clothes in the hamper." Jeremy immediately stood up, picked up his clothes and put them in the hamper.

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

Bringing it Home

Answer the following questions:

Give an example of one activity or a time of the day when it is difficult for children to follow directions:

Why is this activity or time of day difficult?

For the activity or time period you listed, how would you use one or more of the following strategies to make following a direction less difficult for children?

a. Make the direction or transition more fun
b. Tell the child ahead of time what will happen
c. Allow enough time for the child to enjoy activity

How could you use one or more of the following strategies to reduce the number of directions you give during this activity?

a. Give directions only when necessary
b. Offer choices
c. Redirect child to a new activity

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

IN A NUTSHELL

1. There are many reasons that children may not follow directions. They include:
    a. they don't understand what it means
    b. they don't hear a direction
    c. they don't want to do it
    d. to get extra attention

2. Here are some guidelines for giving directions to young children:
    a. give just one direction at a time
    b. give directions that are short and simple
    c. be specific
    d. state the directions positively
    e. make sure the child is paying attentions to you when you give a direction
    f. give extra assistance, if necessary
    g. tell the child what to do rather than asking

3. It is also important to try to not give too many directions to young children. A few guidelines for decreasing the number of directions you give are:
    a. give directions only when necessary,
    b. offer choices, and
    c. redirect the child to a new activity rather than giving a direction.

4. Directions to end a fun activity or begin an activity that a child dislikes are difficult directions for children to follow. Some things you can try to make them easier are:

    a. make the direction or the transition from one activity to another more fun
    b. give the child a warning when you anticipate a difficult direction or transition
    c. wait until the child finishes or has had plenty of time to enjoy the activity she is involved in before giving a direction.

5. When you give your child a direction, two things can happen. Either he follows it or tries to follow it he refuses or ignores the direction. When he does follow a direction, praise or reward him.

6. Give your child plenty or time (5 seconds) to respond to a direction.

7. If your child does not follow a direction, do not repeat the direction. Instead, physically guide him to complete the direction. This means to gently take his hand and guide him complete the action you have asked him to do.

8. "Pick your battles." In other words, give directions that are important to you and that you are willing to follow through on.

LEAP PRESCHOOL

STAFF SKILL TRAINING PROGRAM

MODULE #3: An Introduction to Reinforcement

Main Ideas

✏Definition of Reinforcement

✏Kinds of Reinforcement

✏Recognition of Individual Differences in What is Reinforcing

✏Things to Remember About When and How Often to Reinforce

✏Necessity of "Catching a Child Being Good"

Introduction

(*Pass out Activity Sheet 1.*) The sentences in Part I of this activity sheet all have two things in common; each sentence refers to a behavior that someone wants to increase and each sentence describes a reward for that behavior. *(Read each sentence and ask parents to identify the behavior to be increased and the reward for during the behavior.*)

Definition of Positive Reinforcement

In a previous meeting we talked about how consequences can influence whether or not a behavior will continue. We said that if a behavior is followed by a consequence that is pleasant, the behavior will most likely happen more often. Another word for a pleasant consequence is positive reinforcer. A positive reinforcer is any pleasant object or activity that is given to a person following a behavior which increases that behavior. *(Write the definition on the board.)* Increasing a behavior means that the behavior is likely to a) happen more often, b) happen for a longer period of time, or c) improve in quality. Reinforcement is used to increase behavior many times each day. If one of our behaviors is followed by reinforcement, we will continue to do the behavior in the future. For example, if you order a new dessert and it tastes great, you will probably order it again. If you say hello to a neighbor and that person smiles and says hello back, you will most likely greet him again in the future. If you go to work each day and receive a paycheck at the end of the week, chances are you will continue to go to work. A good dessert, a response to a social gathering, and a paycheck are all examples of reinforcers.

Children are also reinforced for their behavior. For example, when an infant is learning to talk, mom or dad will smile, clap, and hug the child for making her first sounds. The child enjoys this reinforcement and continues to make sounds and words. If Katie draws a picture of her mother and says, "that's beautiful" and hangs it on the refrigerator, she will probably continue to make pictures to give her mom. If dad claps and says, "Good boy" when Andy pulls up his pants for the first time, there is a good chance that Andy will continue this behavior. Attention and rewards given to a child for a certain behavior will increase the likelihood that the behavior will continue in the future.

Kinds of Reinforcers

Try to list ten objects or activities that could be reinforcers to children. *(Write suggestions on the board.)* Reinforcers can be grouped into four categories: social reinforcers; material or activity reinforcers; food reinforcers; and token reinforcers. *(Write each category of reinforcer on the board.)* The first type of reinforcer that we have listed is social reinforcers. Social reinforcement includes any kind of personal attention that a person enjoys. Kisses, hugs, and praise are examples of social reinforcement. *(Point out* *examples from the list and/or ask parents for other examples of social reinforcement. Write the examples under the appropriate heading on the board.)*

The second type is material or activity reinforcers. This includes objects or activities that a person enjoys. A special sticker, listening to a favorite music tape or taking a walk are all examples of material or activity reinforcement. *(Point out examples from the list and/or ask parents for other examples of material or activity reinforcers. Write the examples under the appropriate heading on the board.)*

Next we have food reinforcers. Anything that a person likes to eat or drink can be a food reinforcer. Taking a break for a cup of tea after cleaning the kitchen is one example of a food reinforcer. Food reinforcers for a child may be getting a lollipop for good behavior during a video or getting a cookie for saying or signing "cookie." *(Point out examples from the list and/or ask parents for other examples of food reinforcers. Write the examples under the appropriate heading on the board.)*

The last type of reinforcer is token reinforcers. Token reinforcers are items that can be exchanged for something pleasant at a later time. Token reinforcers are typically used with older children that can wait for a reinforcer and can understand the connection between the token and what they will exchange it for. An example of token reinforcement would be giving your daughter a star on her calendar every morning that she remembers to make her bed. When she has earned ten stars she can exchange them for a trip to McDonald's for lunch. Giving your child an allowance for doing a household chore is also an example of token reinforcement. The money can be exchanged later for candy, a video game, or a small toy. *(Point out examples from the list and/or ask parents for other examples of token reinforcement. Write the examples from the list and/or ask parents for other examples of token reinforcement. Write the examples under the appropriate heading on the board. Note: There is an optional session included in this curriculum that more fully describes token reinforcement.)*

Individual Differences

Many of us have set up "reinforcement plans" for ourselves. Buying a new outfit when you lose weight, taking a long bubble bath after an afternoon of gardening or going out to dinner after painting the bedroom are all examples of how adults motivate themselves to increase a behavior. Let's think about what is reinforcing to us. In Part II of the Activity Sheet passed out earlier, write down something that you don't like to do but think you should do more often. *(Give parents time to complete.)* Now list some reinforcers that might motivate you to do this behavior more often. *(Give parents time to complete. Ask parents to share some of their answers.)* All of us enjoy different things.

What may be reinforcing to one person may not be to someone else. The same is true with children. Watching a Mickey Mouse video may be a terrific reinforcer for Andre, but not very exciting to Cindy. A special snack of peanut butter crackers could be a reinforcer for Marie but not for Jacob who "can't stand peanut butter." Finally think of something that may be a reward for someone else but is not a reward for you. *(Ask parents to share some of their answers.)* For a reinforcer to be effective, that is, for it to increase a behavior, it must be something that the child enjoys.

Another thing to remember about individual differences with reinforcement is that children learn to respond to different reinforcers as they grow and mature. Think about your child as an infant. What things were reinforcers to her? Was praise a reinforcer? Did she do something just because it was the right thing to do? As children grow and mature, they learn to take pride in their accomplishments and enjoy pleasing others. What is reinforcing to an older child may not be enough of or the right type of reinforcer for a younger child. Children of different ages may need different amounts or different types of reinforcement. For example, a young child may love for you to clap your hands and "Oooh and Aaah" over her accomplishments. An older child may prefer a simple "thumbs up."

When to Reinforce

When you are teaching a new behavior, it is important to reinforce immediately after the behavior. *(Write the heading "When to Reinforce" on the board. List "1. Reinforce immediately after the behavior.")* When the reinforcer is given immediately, it is easier for her to know which behaviors to continue. If you wait too long to reinforce her, she may become confused and not know why she is being reinforced.

(Pass out Example Sheet.) Another reason that reinforcement should be immediate is that delaying the reinforcement may result in accidentally teaching a different behavior. *(Refer parents to the first example on the Example Sheet.)* Listen to this example.

Andee was trying to get Wendy to eat vegetables. One evening at dinner, Wendy finished eating all of her vegetables then sat quietly in her chair. Andee was busy talking. After several minutes, Wendy began to loudly bang her spoon on the table and plate. Andee turned to Wendy, noticed that she had eaten all of her vegetables and said, "What a good girl."

(Ask the following questions:)

a. What behavior was Andee trying to increase?

b. Did Andee praise Wendy immediately after she finished the vegetables?

c. What behaviors did Andee actually reinforce?

Because Andee's reinforcement was delayed, she accidentally reinforced Wendy for two behaviors; eating her vegetables and banging her spoon. Andee, without realizing it, may have taught Wendy that if she wants to get praise, she must first get her mom's attention by banging her spoon.

When you first begin to teach a new behavior, reinforce the behavior every time it happens. When a reinforcer is given every time a behavior happens, this is called continuous reinforcement. *(List "2. Reinforce every time, when teaching something new " on the board. Refer parents to example two on Example Sheet.)* Here's an example:

Joe was concerned because Manny would often run into the street when leaving the house. Joe wanted Manny to hold his hand while they walked to the car. He decided to use a favorite music tape as a reinforcer to teach Manny to hold his hand. Joe explained to Manny that if he held hands while they walked to the car, he could put the tape in the car's tape player. Manny held his father's hand every day during the first week. During the second week, the car with the tape player broke down, and Joe had to use a rental car that had no tape player. Two weeks passed before the car with the tape player was repaired. During this time, Manny began to run into the street again.

a. What behavior was Joe trying to reinforce?
b. What was the reinforcer?
c. Was the plan for change working when Manny was reinforced every day?
d. What happened to Manny's behavior when he did not get reinforced every time?

When Manny was reinforced every day, he quickly learned to hold his father's hand. When the reinforcement stopped, however, Manny went back to running into the street. This example points out one of the disadvantages of using continuous reinforcement: although continuous reinforcement is the best way to increase a new behavior, the behavior will quickly disappear when the reinforcer stops.

(Refer parents to example three on the Example Sheet.) Let's look at another example of continuous reinforcement.

Ann got annoyed each time she walked into her five-year-old daughter Mandi's room. Toys were scattered all over her room. Ann decided to hang a chart in Mandi's room and give her a special sticker each night when she cleaned up her room. The sticker chart has worked very well for one month but Ann wonders how long she should continue giving Mandi the expensive stickers.

a. What do you think might happen if Ann stopped giving Mandi the reinforcement?

b. How could Ann gradually change the way Mandi earns reinforcement for cleaning her room?

The final goal for reinforcement programs is that the child work for just praise or for self-satisfaction. Although continuous reinforcement is the best way to teach a new behavior, we cannot stop there. Once a child's behavior has increased, it is important that you gradually fade the amount or type of reinforcement you give. *(List "3. Gradually fade the reinforcer" on the board.)* Fading the reinforcer means that as the child gets better at the behavior, you gradually give less of the reinforcement. In the example with Ann and Mandi, Ann could begin to give Mandi the stickers less often or could begin to give stars or check marks instead of fancy stickers. Both of these are examples of fading the reinforcer.

When you reinforce occasionally, rather than every time, this is called intermittent reinforcement. Intermittent reinforcement is the best way to strengthen a behavior and have it continue for a long time. *(List #4. Reinforce occasionally to strengthen a behavior" on the board.)*

Let's look at some everyday examples of continuous and intermittent reinforcement. Suppose you went on a vacation to Las Vegas and decided to play the slot machines. You put a quarter in the slot machine but do not win any money. Would you put another quarter in? How many quarters would you put in before you would stop? Now you get thirsty and go to a Coke machine. You put your money in and don't get a drink. Would you put more money in? How many times would you try before you would stop?

So when you expect to get reinforced each time, like with the Coke machine, your behavior of putting money in quickly stops when the reinforcement (the Coke) is not received. But, when you don't expect to get reinforced each time, like with the slot machine, your behavior will continue for a longer time. *(Summarize this section by reveiwing the information written on the board.)*

When to reinforce:

1. *Reinforce immediately after the behavior.*
2. *Reinforce every time when teaching something new.*
3. *Gradually fade the reinforcer.*
4. *Reinforce occasionally to strengthen a behavior.*

Catch Your Child Being Good

One of the most important things to remember about reinforcement with children is to "catch your child being good." It is so easy to ignore or take good behavior for granted. When a child is being good, it is easy to get busy doing the million other things parents do each day. However, when we do this we may fall into a trap. The child finds out that to get the parents' attention he has to misbehave. It is much more effective to try to prevent the misbehavior by catching the child while he is being good and giving him some special attention. Often this can be simply rubbing his back, a hug, or a smile. But, sometimes you may need to take a break from what you are doing and spend some time playing, talking or doing a special activity with the child. Remember these three things:

a. Catch your child being good.
b. Don't take good behavior for granted.
c. Praise your child often for good behavior.

Bringing it Home

Pass out the "Bringing it Home" handout for this session. Go over the directions and discuss responses of those parents that wish to share the information.

Summary

Summarize this session by reviewing the following:

A. Positive reinforcement is any pleasant object or activity that is given to a person following a behavior which increases that behavior.

B. Reinforcers can be grouped into four categories:

1. Social Reinforcement
2. Material or Activity Reinforcement
3. Food Reinforcement
4. Token Reinforcement

C. Here are some things to remember about when to reinforce:

1. Reinforce immediately after the behavior you want to increase,
2. When teaching a new behavior, reinforce the behavior every time it happens,
3. As the child learns the behavior, gradually fade the type or amount of reinforcement you use, and
4. Reinforce occasionally to strengthen a behavior.

D. Catch the children being good. Praise or reinforce good behavior often.

In a Nutshell

Pass out the "In a Nutshell" handout. Suggest to the parents that they read over the handout as an additional review and that they share the information with family members, other care givers and interested friends.

PARTICIPANT'S'S PACKET

Example Sheet

1. Andee was trying to get her daughter Wendy to eat vegetables. One evening at dinner, Wendy finished eating all of her vegetables then sat quietly in her chair. Andee was busy talking. After several minutes, Wendy began to loudly bang her spoon on the table and plate. Andee turned to Wendy, noticed that she had eaten all the vegetables, and said, "What a good girl."

2. Joe was concerned because his son, Manny, would often run into the street when leaving the house. Joe wanted Manny to hold his hand while they walked to the car. He decided to use a favorite music tape as a reinforcer to teach Manny to hold his hand. Joe explained to Manny that if he held hands while they walked to the car, he could put the tape in the car's tape player. Manny held his father's hand every day during the first week. During the next week, the car with the tape player broke down and Joe had to use a rental car that had no tape player. Two weeks passed before the car with the tape player was repaired. During the time, Manny began to run into the street again.

3. Ann got annoyed each time she walked into her five-year-old daughter Mandi's room. Mandi's toys were scattered all over her room. Ann decided to hang a chart in Mandi's room and giver her a special sticker each night when she cleaned up her room. The sticker chart has worked very well for one month but Ann wonders how long she should continue giving Mandi the expensive stickers.

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

Activity Sheet

PART I:

Read each statement. Identify the behavior that someone wants to increase and the reward for doing the behavior.

1. Each month a local nursing home honors a "Volunteer or the Month." Individuals who are nominated are those volunteers who have donated 20 hours or more that month. In addition to being honored at a special luncheon, a picture of the Volunteer-of-the-Month appears in the agency newsletter.

2. People's Bank advertises that free radios, calculators, and crystal will be given to customers who open savings accounts during the month of October.

3. Every Thursday night, the Oak Table Restaurant has a "Two-for-One" dinner special.

4. A preschool is selling chance tickets. The first prize is an all expense paid weekend for two in Atlantic City.

5. The American Auto Dealership gives their salespeople a 10% commission on each car that they sell.

PART II:

Fill in the following information:

I don't like to ________________________ but I know I should do it more often.

I might do it more often if:

____

____

I don't like ________________________ but I know that other people do.

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

Bringing it Home

List a few reinforcers for a child or children that could be used to increase a behavior during each of the following activities. Remember that reinforcers can be social, material or activity, food, or token.

Mealtimes:______________________________

____

Playtime:______________________________

____

Shopping: ______________________________

____

Riding in the car:________________________

____

Bathtime:______________________________

____

Outdoor play:____________________________

____

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

In a Nutshell

1. Positive reinforcement is defined as any pleasant object or activity that is given to a person following a behavior which increases that behavior.

2. There are many different kinds of reinforcers. They can be grouped into the following categories:

   a) Social reinforcement
   b) Material or activity reinforcement
   c) Food reinforcement
   d) Token reinforcement

3. Social Reinforcement includes any kind of personal attention that a person enjoys. Kisses, hugs, and praise are examples of social reinforcement.

4. Material or activity reinforcement includes objects or activities that a person enjoys. A favorite toy or a shiny penny could be used as material reinforcers. A trip to the zoo or a special story are examples of activity reinforcement.

5. Examples of food reinforcers could include raisins, juice, cookies, or grapes. When using food reinforcers, remember:

   a) use nutritious foods if possible,
   b) give small amounts
   c) children will tire of food or drinks if they are used as reinforcers too often.

6. Token reinforcement means reinforcing a child with an item that can be exchanged for something pleasant at a later time. Examples of token reinforcement include a) stars, checkmarks or stickers on a chart that when saved up, can be exchanged for a trip to the amusement park or b) pennies that can be exchanged for a special treat at the end of the day. Remember that a child must be able to

wait for reinforcement for a token reinforcer to be effective. Some young children or children with developmental delays may not understand the connection between the token and the reinforcement that comes much later.

7. Here are some things to remember about when to reinforce:

   a) It is important to reinforce immediately after the behavior you are trying to increase.

   b) When you first begin to teach a new behavior, reinforce the behavior every time it happens. This is called continuous reinforcement.

   c) Although continuous reinforcement is the best way to teach a new behavior, the behavior will quickly stop when the reinforcer is discontinued.

   d) Once a child's behavior has increased, it is important to gradually fade the amount or type of reinforcement we give.

   e) When you reinforce occasionally, rather than every time, this is called intermittent reinforcement. Intermittent reinforcement is the best way to strengthen a behavior and have it continue for a long time.

8. Catch your child being good. Don't take good behavior for granted. Praise or reinforce your child often for good behavior.

LEAP PRESCHOOL

STAFF SKILL TRAINING PROGRAM

MODULE #4: How to Use Reinforcement with Children

Main Ideas

- How to Use Praise Effectively
- Rewarding Small Steps
- Natural Reinforcement
- Considerations When Selecting Reinforcers

INTRODUCTION

The last time we met, we talked about reinforcement. *(Write the word reinforcement on the board.)* We defined reinforcement as any pleasant object or activity that is given to a person after a behavior which increases that behavior. Increasing a behavior means that the behavior is likely to a) happen more often, b) happen for a longer period of time, and c) improve in quality. Today we are going to talk about some specific suggestions for using reinforcement with children.

SOCIAL REINFORCEMENT

Social reinforcement is any type of personal attention that someone enjoys. Social reinforcement includes hugs, kisses, and praise. All of these are easy and fun to give and cost nothing. Children enjoy attention and praise and will often continue to do a behavior that results in attention from adults. Praise is a common and important social reinforcer.

Since praise is such an important reinforcer, let's spend some time talking about good ways to use praise. One important thing to remember about using praise with your children is to be specific. Read these two statements:

a) "Thanks Bobby."
b) "Thanks for putting your clothes in the hamper, Bobby."

Which statement would mean more to Bobby? When you use specific praise to reinforce a child, he will know what he did that pleased you. He will also know what behavior to continue in the future to get your positive attention. *(Pass out the Activity Sheet. Ask parents to complete Part I, restating non-specific praise statements using specific praise.)*

Another thing to remember when using praise with children is to be enthusiastic. A child may not be reinforced if he is praised sarcastically or in a monotone. Listen to this example: *(model the following praise statement in a monotone voice)* "I like the way you put your toys away." Do you think a child would find that statement reinforcing? Your tone of voice and facial expression should reflect your pleasure with your child's behavior. Your facial expression and enthusiastic praise is especially important if your child is very young or if the child may not understand the words in your praise statement.

Make sure your child is listening when you praise her. When you can, get down to your child's level and look right at her. Make sure the child sees your smile. This, again, will help her understand that you are pleased.

As adults, we may want children to learn to be reinforced by praise alone, but many young children or children with developmental delays may not initially recognize praise as reinforcing. One way to teach children to respond to praise alone is to initially praise them as you give them some other reinforcer. Here are some examples"

a) *Her dad gives Lisa a big hug and says "nice talking" when Lisa says "Hi" to him.*

b) *Bonnie claps her hands as she tells her daughter "You did it, Gina! You took your coat off all by yourself."*

c) *In the grocery store, Jared's son, Alex, is sitting in the cart. Jared gives his son a small box of raisins and says "Thanks for sitting quietly, Alex."*

Tickling, hugging, kisses, "piggy back" rides, back rubs, clapping hands, kisses and even a "give me five" are examples of social reinforcers that could be paired with praise. If you can, pair the praise with another social reinforcement before trying more tangible reinforcers. However, if needed, praise can be paired with any reinforcer; food, material or activity, social or token. Remember to gradually fade the extra reinforcer to teach your child to respond to praise of attention alone.

As children grow and mature, they learn to take pride in their own accomplishments and enjoy pleasing other people who are important to them. As children reach this stage and begin to understand more, parents can begin to use encouraging statements that focus less on the specific behavior and more on how the child and teacher feel. Encouragement can be given for effort and improvement and helps the child feel proud of his abilities. Here are examples of encouragement statements:

1. *"You must be proud of yourself."*

2. *"I can see you really worked hard on that."*
3. *"I'm glad you're having fun."*

USING REINFORCEMENT NATURALLY

When you need to use a reinforcer other than social, it is a good idea to think of a way to use it in a natural situation. *(Pass out Example Sheet. Refer parents to Example #1.)*

> *Denise was trying to teach her son, Taylor, to undress himself. She knows that the most reinforcing things for Taylor are candy, playing with puzzles, watching cartoon videos and playing in water. Rather than giving Taylor an M&M for each piece of clothing he takes off or allowing him to watch a video when he undresses himself, Denise decided to work on undressing before bathtime. She bought Taylor a special bath puzzle and gives him one piece of the puzzle for each piece of clothing he removes. Taylor loves throwing each piece in the tub to make a splash. As soon as he is completely undressed, he gets to play with the puzzle during his bath.*

The reinforcer that Denise chose is directly related to the behavior she is reinforcing. A natural reinforcer, as in this example, is the way people will respond to a child in everyday life. If a child says "Daddy" for the first time, it is more natural for Daddy to give him a hug or play a tickling game then to give him a sticker or a grape.

Another way to use reinforcement naturally is to use pleasant, routine activities to motivate your child to do something he enjoys. One way to do this is to use "Grandma's Rule". This rule states "You do what I want you to do, then you can do what you want to do". Here are two examples;

a) *"Let me comb your hair and then you can go out to play" (Rather than "You can't play if you won't let me comb your hair")*

b) *"Lie down in bed and then I'll read you a story" (Rather than "No story if you won't lie down")*

***** ***Grandma's Rule helps us to use positive rather than negative statements to motivate children.*** (*Ask parents to complete Part II of the Activity Sheet, restating negative statements in positive terms.*)

REWARDING SMALL STEPS

(Note: The following paragraph describes an activity that is optional. It is best used when presenting to a group.)

I am going to give you a chance to earn a reinforcer. To get this reinforcer, all you have to do is list names of famous people or characters whose first and last names begin with the same letter of the alphabet. For example, Mickey Mouse; both Mickey and Mouse begin with the letter M. I would like people to learn to do this behavior very quickly. If you succeed you can earn an all expense paid trip to Disneyland. You will have 30 seconds to list all 26 names. (*Pass out paper and pencils. Using a stopwatch, tell the group when to begin and end. When time is up, ask the following questions:)*

a) *How many of you were able to list all 26 names.*

b) *Did you feel you had a reasonable chance at winning the trip?*

This is an exaggerated example of a reinforcement that did not work. I asked you to do something that was much too hard. As a result, you were not successful, I was not able to increase your behavior, and you have have felt like you failed. If I had asked you to only list three or four names, do you think you would have been more successful?

It is important to reinforce your child for small steps of improvement rather than setting a goal that is too difficult for her. *(Refer parents to Example #2 on the Example Sheet. Here is an example:)*

> *Evelyn was in tears almost every morning. Her son Aaron would refuse to get out of bed each morning. He would make his body stiff to resist his mother dressing him and he would push her away when she tried to wash his face or brush his teeth. There was almost always a tantrum at the breakfast table. Evelyn needed a plan for change. She decided to give Aaron stickers of his favorite cartoon character for cooperating and doing what she asked him each morning. She explained to Aaron that he needed to get out of bed, help put his clothes on, allow his face to be washed and his teeth brushed and to sit quietly at breakfast to get the sticker. On the first day, Aaron got out of bed, dressed himself, and cooperated in washing his face and brushing his teeth, but had a tantrum at breakfast. On the second day, Aaron got out of bed, but did not cooperate in dressing or washing up. The third and fourth days were similar. And on the fifth day Aaron refused to get out of bed. Aaron never got a sticker.*

Evelyn was asking Aaron too change to many behaviors for one small reinforcer. How could Evelyn break the behavior of cooperating and following directions in the morning into smaller steps? *(Give group time to discuss. Possible responses could include a) rewarding Aaron as soon as he got out of bed and gradually requiring more steps before giving the reinforcer, or b) giving a sticker for each of the behaviors.)* Requiring a drastic change in behavior to receive a reinforcer might not be effective. In other words, reward for small steps of improvement.

CONSIDERATIONS WHEN CHOOSING A REINFORCER

When you have decided that social reinforcement alone is not enough to motivate your child to increase a certain behavior, it's time to think about what other reinforcement could be used. Certainly, you'll want to choose something that you know your child enjoys, but there are some other things to consider. For one thing, reinforcement should be convenient and not disruptive to your daily routine. Giving your child homemade pancakes for breakfast because he made his bed may be difficult during a hectic morning. If it is difficult to give the reinforcement you choose, you may find yourself skipping it, or promising to give it later which could be less effective. *(Ask parents for other examples of reinforcers that might be too disruptive or inconvenient.)* The reinforcer you choose should not lead to disruptive behavior. *(Refer parents to Example #3 on the Example Sheet.)*

> *Tyrone's mother, Kate, wanted to increase his appropriate behavior during shopping. She decided to let him have the car keys to open the car door and trunk if he was quiet and stayed in the cart while they shopped. However, when they got to the car, Kate always had a struggle to get the keys back. Tyrone wanted to put the keys in the ignition and start the car, too. He would cry, push her away and sometimes lie down on the ground when his mother asked him to give her the keys.*

This is an example of a reinforcer that leads to a disruptive behavior. Using a noisy toy as a reinforcer then asking your child to play quietly because the room is getting too noisy would be another example. *(Ask the group for other examples of reinforcers that may lead to disruptive behavior.)*

It is also important, when you plan to use a special reinforcer, that is not available at other times during your child's day. If your child gets pudding for snack at school, using pudding as a reinforcer for good behavior during dinner may not be effective. When you plan to use a special reinforcement to increase your child's behavior, talk to other caregivers to make sure they know not to offer the same thing.

A reinforcer should only be given if your child does the behavior. *(Refer parents to Example #4 on the Example Sheet.)*

> *Sammy's parents were working on teaching him to communicate by showing them pictures. Since cheese curls were one of Sammy's favorite foods, they put a picture of them in his communication book. When Sammy banged on the cupboard door to indicate he wanted a snack, his father showed him his book. If Sammy did not indicate the correct picture, his father would still give him the cheese curls.*

Sammy got the reinforcer, whether or not he showed his parents the correct picture. He may not be motivated to use pictures to communicate if he knows he'll get the cheese curls anyway. You must be willing to physically help your child do the behavior or to withhold the reinforcer you choose when your child does not do the desired behavior. You would not want to promise a trip to Grandma's or a day at the amusement park for good behavior if you are not willing to cancel the outings.

Another important thing about choosing a reinforcer is to change the reinforcer or vary it so that your child does not get tired of it. If you decide to use your child's favorite book as a reinforcer for sitting on the potty, keep in mind that after a few times "The Cat in the Hat" may no longer be your child's favorite book. He may be bored with it. If you are aware that a reinforcer is becoming less motivating, you can either pick a new reinforcer, for example a small toy, or you can vary the reinforcer, in other words, try a different book. Sometimes the person giving the reinforcer may also get bored or tired of it and begin to be less enthusiastic in giving it. This would be another time to think about changing or varying the reinforcer.

Finally, when you give your child a special reinforcer, try to give only the amount needed. For example, if an inexpensive matchbox car is motivating your child, don't use a more expensive, larger toy car. Also, if you decide to use a food reinforcer such as animal crackers, use one or two crackers rather than the whole box. If you use too much of the same reinforcer, your child will get tired of it. *(Ask parents for examples of reinforcers they have tried that their children got tired of.)*

BRINGING IT HOME

Pass out the "Bringing it Home" handout for this module. Go over the directions and discuss responses of those parents that wish to share the information.

SUMMARY

Summarize the session by reviewing the following:

A. When you use praise with your child:

  1. be specific,
  2. be enthusiastic,
  3. make sure he is listening,
  4. when necessary, pair praise with another reinforcer, and
  5. begin to use encouragement statements as the child matures and is able to understand more

B. When you use a reinforcer other than praise, use it in a natural situation.

C. Reinforce your child for small steps of improvement rather than setting a goal that is so difficult that she has little chance to earn the reinforcement.

D. Choose a reinforcement that:

  1. is convenient and not disruptive to your routine,
  2. does not lead to disruptive behavior,
  3. is not available at other times, and
  4. you are willing to not give in if the behavior does not occur.

E. If your child gets tired of the same reinforcer, try something new. Give only the amount of reinforcement necessary so that the child does not get tired of it.

IN A NUTSHELL

Pass out the "In a Nutshell" handout. Suggest to the parents that they read over the handout as an additional review and that they share the information with family members, other caregivers, and interested friends.

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

Activity Sheet

Part I:

Restate the following praise statements using specific praise:

1) Albert said quietly during church.
   Nonspecific praise: "You're a good kid, Albert."
   Specific praise: ____________________________

2) Sally says "Hi" to her grandmother.
   Nonspecific praise: "That's nice."
   Specific praise: __________________

Part II:

Use "Grandma's Rule" to restate these negative statements into more positive terms:

1) Negative: "No television until you stop crying."
   Positive: _________________________________

2) Negative: "If you don't sit down, you won't get any juice."
   Positive: ____

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

Example Sheet

1. Denise was trying to teach her son, Taylor, to undress himself. She knows that the most reinforcing things for Taylor are candy, playing with puzzles, watching cartoon videos and playing in water. Rather than giving Taylor an M&M for each piece of clothing he takes off or allowing him to watch a video when he undresses himself, Denise decided to work on undressing before bathtime. She bought Taylor a special bath puzzle and gives him one piece of the puzzle for each piece of clothing he removes. Taylor loves throwing each piece in the tub to make a splash. As soon as he is completely undressed, he gets to play with the puzzle during his bath.

2. Evelyn was in tears almost every morning. Her son Aaron would refuse to get out of bed each morning. He would make his body stiff to resist his mother dressing him and he would push her away when she tried to wash his face or brush his teeth. There was almost always a tantrum at the breakfast table. Evelyn needed a plan for change. She decided to give Aaron stickers of his favorite cartoon character for cooperating and doing what she asked him each morning. She explained to Aaron that he needed to get out of bed, help put his clothes on, allow his face to be washed and his teeth brushed and to sit quietly at breakfast to get the sticker.
   On the first day, Aaron got out of bed, dressed himself, and cooperated in washing his face and brushing his teeth, but had a tantrum at the breakfast table. On the second day, Aaron got out of bed, bud did not cooperate in dressing or washing up. The third and fourth days were similar. And on the fifth day, Aaron refused to get out of bed. Aaron never received a sticker.

3. Tyrone's mother, Kate, wanted to increase his appropriate behavior during shopping. She decided to let him have the car keys to open the car door and the trunk if he was quiet and stayed in the cart while they shopped. However, when they got to the car, Kate always had a struggle to get the keys back. Tyrone wanted to put the keys in the ignition and start the car, too. He would cry, push her away, and sometimes lie down on the ground when his mother asked him to give her the keys.

4. Sammy's parents were working on teaching him to communicate by showing them pictures. Since cheese curls were one of Sammy's favorite foods, they put on a picture of them in his communication book. When Sammy banged on the cupboard door to indicate he wanted a snack, his father showed him his book. If Sammy did not indicate the correct picture, his father would still give him the cheese curls.

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

Bringing it Home

Fill in the answers for the following statements:

One behavior that I would like my child to increase is:

____

Here is an example of how I could be specific when praising my child for this behavior:

____

I think that just praise will be motivating enough to increase this behavior:

__ Yes

__ No

If no..... I will try to pair the praise with the following reinforcer:

____

Will this reinforcer....

Be convenient?	___ Yes	__ No
Be disruptive to daily routine?	___ Yes	__ No
Lead to disruptive behavior?	___ Yes	__ No
Available at other times?	___ Yes	__ No

If I need to change or vary the reinforcer because my child gets tired of it, here's what I could try:

____

If you would like to try this reinforcement plan until next time we meet, we'll take him to share "results" at the next meeting.

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

In a Nutshell

1. Social reinforcement is any type of personal attention that a person enjoys. Praise is a common and important social reinforcer.

2. To praise most effectively, remember to:

   a. be specific
   b. be enthusiastic
   c. make sure your child is listening
   d. pair praise with other reinforcers if praise alone is not effective,
   e. begin to use encouraging statements as the child matures and is able to understand more

3. When you need to use a reinforcer other than social, try to use it in a natural situation. For example, if you want to use a food reinforcer to teach colors, you could use jellybeans, M&M's, or other colored foods. Ask the child what color the food is, then give it to him for a correct answer.

4. Use Grandma's rule to motivate children in a positive way. Grandma's rule states "You do what I want you to do, then you can do what you want to do". Grandma's rule uses activities or materials that the child enjoys to reinforce behaviors that the child does not enjoy. An example of Grandma's rule is "Pick up the puzzles, then we can paint".

5. Reinforce your child for small steps of improvement. Do not require a drastic change in behavior for your child to earn a reinforcer.

6. Here are some things to consider when using a reinforcer other than social reinforcement. The reinforcer should:

   a. be convenient and not disruptive to your daily routine,
   b. not lead to disruptive behavior,
   c. not be available at other times,
   d. be given only when the child has done the behavior,
   e. be changed or varied if the child gets bored with it, and
   f. be given in small amounts.

SUPPLEMETAL HANDOUTS

Token Reinforcement

WHAT IS A TOKEN REINFORCEMENT?

Token reinforcement is a way to motivate children to increase good behavior. Your child is given a chance to earn "tokens" for good behavior or for completing a task. Tokens can be any type of object or symbol. Some example are:

plastic chips,
stars,
stamps,
points,
checkmarks,
stickers,
happy faces,
play money,
links in a chain,
etc.

When your child earns enough tokens, she can exchange them for a reward. Here are some examples:

1) Greg gets a star on a chart each night that he gets into bed by 9:00 and lies quietly until he is asleep. At the end of the week, if he has 5 starts, he can go to McDonald's for lunch.

2) Shaneen earns one token for making her bed, one for brushing her teeth, and one for combing her hair each morning. If she earns at least two tokens in the morning, she can either have a fancy sticker, wear special jewelry to school, or watch her favorite video right after school.

3) Scott's mother gives him three pennies when he plays independently with toys or twenty minutes while she makes dinner. He can earn two pennies for putting his toys away and one penny for coming to the dinner table when called. When he earns at least four pennies, he can choose to play a special game with his dad, have a special dessert, or have a bubble bath with new tub toys.

STEP BY STEP

Here are the steps to follow when planning a token reinforcement system for your child:

1. Decide what behavior you would like your child to increase. Remember that with young children it is best to focus on only one or two behaviors at a time. To decrease an undesirable behavior, think about what desirable behavior you would like your child to do in its place. For example, if your child cries and refuses to go to bed, you would like to increase the number of times he goes to bed when you ask and stays in his bed.

2. Decide what to use for tokens. A variety of different objects or symbols can be used as tokens. Tokens should be easily accessible to you but not available to your child from other sources. Tokens should also be safe and durable.

3. Decide on rewards for which tokens can be exchanged. A variety of different rewards can be offered for which the tokens your child earns can be exchanged. Some examples would include a special dessert or treat, a visit to the park, a trip to the zoo, or a new toy. Provide your child with a few choices if possible. The reward should be motivating to your child and only available when your child has enough tokens to "cash in."

4. Decide how often and when your child can exchange tokens for rewards. It is a good idea with young children to have a time for them to exchange tokens every day. Older children may be able to save tokens for a few days or a week. When a token system is set up for a very specific period of time, try to allow time for your child to exchange the tokens for the reward immediately following the activity. For example, if your child is earning tokens for his behavior while you are making dinner, it may be a good idea for him to be able to exchange the tokens during or immediately following the meal.

   Another way to set up a token system is to allow your child to exchange the tokens as soon as he gets a certain number. For example, "Sara can get an ice cream sandwich as soon as she earns four tokens." This will only work if the rewards are objects or events that can be given at any time of the day. If the reward is a trip to the zoo and your child earns the right number of tokens at 9 PM, he would not be able to immediately exchange the tokens for the reward.

5. Estimate the number of tokens your child could currently earn in that time period. If you think your child could currently earn five tokens, begin with that requirement. This will make it more likely that your child will be successful right from the beginning.

   If you are setting up the token system so that your child can exchange the tokens as soon as he earns enough, estimate how many tokens he can earn and how long he will be able to wait for the reward. If it would take him two weeks to earn the number of tokens you specify, he may lose interest in the token system before he gets a chance to exchange the tokens for rewards. It may be more effective to require fewer tokens so that he can earn enough tokens to exchange for a reward in one to two days.

AN EXAMPLE

Kayla's parents were frustrated. Whenever they would tell Kayla it was time to switch activities, she would scream, "No" and begin to cry. This would happen when it was time to get in the car and go to preschool, when it was time to put toys away and eat dinner, when it was time to turn off the TV and go to bed and many other times each day. They decided to try a "smiley face" chart. On the top of a piece of paper they wrote "OK." They divided the paper into six squares. They then explained to Kayla that if she said "OK" and did what she was asked to do, she would get a smiley face drawn in one of the squares. When she got all six squares filled up, she could pick a prize. A prize could be to rent to video, to go to McDonald's for dinner, or go to the park.

1. What behavior did her parents want Kayla to increase?

   ____

2. What are her parents going to use for tokens?

   ____

3. What rewards will Kayla be able to exchange the tokens for?

   ____

4. When will Kayla exchange the tokens?

   ____

5. How many tokens does Kayla need to earn to get a reward?

   ____

OTHER GUIDELINES:

1. Token reinforcement systems should be used only if your child is able to understand the idea of exchanging tokens for rewards. Very young children and children with developmental delays may not be able to wait a long period of time to earn enough tokens to exchange for the reward.

2. Make the token system as visually concrete as possible. A system of tokens or a chart that your child can look at be able to get an idea of how close he is to having enough tokens is very effective. Here are two examples:

   a) Rebecka has a sign on the refrigerator door that says, "ICE CREAM." Each time she comes when her mother or father calls her, she is given a magnetic letter that she matches to the sign. After dinner, if she has the whole word filled in, she can have a dish of ice cream.

   b) There is a hook on the wall in the bathroom of the Schmidt house. He earns a link of chain each time he goes to the potty. He connects the links and hangs the chain on the wall. When the chain is long enough to touch the floor, Noah can exchange the chain for a new Matchbox car.

3. Explain the token system to your child. Explain to your child how she can earn tokens, what rewards the tokens can be exchanged for and when she can exchange the tokens for rewards. If possible, get your child's input into the types of rewards to use.

4. Gradually fade the token reinforcement system. Gradually increase the amount of the behavior you require before giving a token. Also, increase the delays between earning the tokens and the time to exchange them for rewards. Once you begin to fade the token system, substitute praise and other social reinforcement for the tokens.

LEAP PRESCHOOL

STAFF SKILL TRAINING PROGRAM

MODULE #5: Planning Activities to Increase Desired Behaviors

Main Ideas

- Planning Activities that are Enjoyable and Appropriate
- Anticipating Problems During Activities
- Controlling Materials
- Scheduling Activities
- Establishing Reinforcement Plans, Rules and Consequences During Activities

INTRODUCTION

(Pass out Example Sheet.) Let's begin by looking at the first example:

Keith and his wife, Becky, are planning a trip to visit Keith's parents. They will be driving for eight hours with their three children, Dean (8 yrs), Will (3 yrs) and Jane (11 mos.). When they went on this trip just two months ago, it was as Dean describes it, "a disaster". Keith and Becky know that they will have to plan carefully to make sure this is a pleasant trip for everyone.

Parents dread certain times of the day or certain activities because their children do not always behave well during them. Today we will be talking about how to plan for these times to make them easier and more enjoyable for everyone.

ANTICIPATE PROBLEMS

In our example, Keith and Becky have already begun the process of planning activities in increase desired behavior. They are anticipating that, without some pre-planning, the eight hour car trip could be difficult. The first thing that is important in planning for certain activities is to anticipate problems. This step is usually easy for parents. Parents can often predict very accurately if their children will behave during certain activities and which activities are likely to be difficult. Sometimes you can anticipate problems because of your child's behavior during the same activity or a similar activity in the past. Other activities that may be difficult are those that happen infrequently, such as a car trip or a long series of doctor's appointments in one day. And, sometimes you can anticipate that an activity will be difficult if it occurs during a time of day when you or your child are tired.

Once you have thought about an activity or a time or day that you would like to plan for, it may be helpful to think about what you would like your child to be doing during this time and some of the undesirable behaviors that may come up. Let's look at example #2 on the Example Sheet.

> *Keith and Becky would like their children to sleep or play quietly during the long car trip. During the trip two months ago, all three children were awake during most of the trip. There were many arguments over toys and quite a bit of crying, and trying to get out of seatbelts.*

Thinking about what you would like your child to be doing and what some of the problems may be will help you with thorough planning for the activity. *(Pass out the Activity Sheet Review, the car trip example, and ask parents what they would like their child to do at the grocery store. Also ask parents to anticipate what problems may occur when taking a young child to a grocery store.)*

KEEP YOUR CHILD BUSY OR ENTERTAINED

Another way to encourage desired behavior during an activity is to think about ways to keep your child busy or entertained. Listen to example #3.

> *Keith and Becky have quite a few ideas for keeping their children busy during the long trip. They have prepared separate bags of toys for each child. Dean (8 yrs) helped get his own bag ready. He packed three books, a hand held video game and tape player with headphones. His mother also bought him a map so he can follow the route. Will (3 yrs) has a coloring book and crayons, his favorite stuffed animal, Disney characters dolls and a new picture book. Becky filled Jane's (11mos) bag with rattles, a wind up radio and her blanket. Keith has*

collected a supply of snacks and juice boxes for the trip.

These parents have thought of several ways to keep Keith and other children busy during the trip. These ideas can be used in may situations. One thing to think about is how to make the time or activity more fun. For example, if the activity is waiting to pick up a brother or sister at the bus stop, you may be able to think of a game to play while you are waiting . Counting cars, finding colors (i.e. the "I see something you don't see..." game) or singing songs may help pass the time.

You may also be able to make the activity more fun by involving your child in the activity. When a child is not involved in the activity, the boredom may result in undesirable behaviors. Just sitting in the cart during grocery shopping or waiting while mom makes dinner may not be very exciting for a young child. Although having a child "help" make dinner or find things in the grocery store may make the activity longer, the time spent together may be more enjoyable and there will probably be fewer undesirable behaviors. Involving your child in the activity also helps her begin to learn what is expected of her in that situation. Some other examples of involving your child in an activity would be allowing your child to look at choose his own meal at a restaurant, giving your child some small things to pack for a vacation or letting your child put the stamps on the envelopes while you are paying bills. For some activities, you may want to set up a "play" set of materials that your child can use while you do the real activity. A toy sink and dishes in the kitchen, an old typewriter, paper and pens in the den, or a toy lawnmower and gardening tools in the yard can encourage a child to pretend to help mom or dad.

When an activity involves some waiting, like waiting in line at the bank or store or waiting for an appointment at the doctor's office, you may need to bring some things with you to keep children entertained. A small bag of toys, some favorite books, or snacks may make waiting more fun. Many restaurants make this easy for parents by providing crayons, placements to color, small toys, or crackers for children while they are waiting for their meal. Sometimes a child shows such a special preference for a certain toy or object that her parents would like to limit how long she plays with it. Some examples of this may be a child that would spend hours winding up and listening to a toy radio or watching a toy car roll back and forth. The parents may want to limit the amount of time with these toys so that their child learns to play with other toys or interact with friends and family. Even if you are trying to limit the amount of time your child does a certain activity, you can use these special preferences to your advantage. You may decide that your child can have that toy when you need your child to play independently and quietly for a period of time. In other words, save that object or toy for special occasions when you know that a particular activity may be difficult.

Finally, when an activity or time of day is consistently difficult, you may want to set aside special items or snacks that you use just for that activity. For example, some parents keep some special, quiet toys, such as colorforms, videotapes or special markers and paper, near the telephone so that they can give them to their children when they need to talk for a while without being disturbed. These toys should be toys that your child is familiar with, can do by himself, and are "special" enough that he will spend some time with them. Another example of setting aside special items is having a bag of toys that stays in the car. Toys such as drawing boards, books, or a few small character dolls may keep your child's attention during a daily commute to school. Let's look back at the Activity Sheet and look at how to plan alternative activities for these examples. *(Review the car trip example and ask parents for ideas when taking a young child to a grocery store.)*

CONTROL MATERIALS

When you take toys, snacks, or books along on a field trip, another thing to plan to increase desired behavior is how to keep some control over the materials. Keith and Becky think that this is the biggest mistake they made during the last long trip they took. Look at example #4.

> *During the last trip Keith and his family took to visit his parents, they felt that there was no control in the car. Toys were scattered everywhere, the boys were throwing food at each other and the baby kept putting small toys in her mouth.*

Dean and Will were grabbing toys from each other and arguing almost constantly. To keep more control over materials, Becky plans to hold Will and Jane's bags and give out one item at a time. She will also remind Dean to put things away when he is done so that the other children will not bother with them. Becky plans to keep all of the snacks in the front seat with her. Keith and Becky were careful to avoid toys like small cars that Will and Dean often argue over and Lego blocks that Jane may put in her mouth.

Keith and Becky plan to control the materials in several ways. One way to control materials is to control how quickly children use the materials you bring along. Keith and Becky plan to do this by giving just one item at a time to their younger children so that they are not tired of all that they brought in just a short period of time. Some parents wrap surprises for trips and give one to their children every hour they are in the car. These surprises can be inexpensive toys or snacks.

In this example, Keith and Becky also plan to make sure one thing is put away before getting the next one out. Young children have a difficult time planning activities and can easily become overwhelmed when there are too many things to choose from. When each item is put away before getting another one out, the materials remain organized and children can spend more time with one toy without being distracted by other materials that are within sight. This strategy is often helpful at home when children tend to have every toy they own scattered all over the house. It is surprising how toys can be "rediscovered" when they are organized in a new way; on shelves, in new bins, baskets or boxes or just one toy at a time organized on a table or floor in a tempting manner.

Keeping some toys out of reach can also eliminate the problem of children constantly wanting to change toys. Toys with many small parts, toys that need adult supervision and toys that a child has a difficult time sharing with others in the classroom can be placed on a high shelf, on top of the refrigerator, or in a cupboard until a time when you have time to play with your child. Keeping certain toys out of reach can also limit the amount of time a child spends with a certain toy. When children are overwhelmed by the number of toys available to them, many teachers put some of the toys away in a closet for a few weeks then switch toys. Suddenly, all of those old toys seem new and interesting again.

It is also important when you are planning materials for a certain activity that you select toys or objects that don't encourage undesirable behavior. Keith and Becky did this when they decided to avoid Legos and small cars in our example. When you are busy, you don't have time to be teaching the appropriate way to play with toys or responding to undesirable behaviors. It is easier to pick toys that your child knows how to play with and typically plays with appropriately.

Finally, don't forget to think about the safety of the materials you choose. Select toys or objects that your child can play with safely and childproof environments. If you are planning for an activity during which you won't be with your child or you will be unable to always be watching your child, make sure the toys, objects, furniture, and other materials in the area are safe for your child. If your child tends to climb on furniture, you may not want to leave him alone in a room with high bookshelves or dressers. If your child puts small items in her mouth, you would want to make sure the toys and materials in the area are large enough that they cannot be swallowed.

Look at Activity Sheet again. Let's plan how to control materials during these activities. *(Review the long car trip example and ask parents for ideas in this area for the grocery store example.)*

PLAN APPROPRIATE ACTIVITIES

When you are planning an activity or time of day for your child, think about if the activity and the length of the activity are appropriate for your child's age and interests. *(Refer to example #5 with the long car trip:)*

> *Becky and Keith have planned several stops along the way to make the long car trip a little easier for their young family. They know of a fast food restaurant along the way that has a very nice playground and plan to stop there for breakfast. They have packed a picnic ground for lunch and to let the children run around a little. Another quick stop is planned at a roadside rest stop is planned for the afternoon.*

A two hour shopping trip or long visit with an elderly aunt can be quite difficult for a young child. Sometimes this is simply because the child is too young, does not understand the purpose of the trips or the conversations that are taking place. Young children can easily get bored during adult activities. If you aren't sure what is appropriate for your child, talk to other parents or watch other children during similar activities. Sometimes the behaviors that are really bothering you, may be quite typical for young children.

Sometimes you can break up activities so that a long activity is easier for a child. Half way through a long shopping trip you can give child a chance to stop for a snack or play on video game. Your child may enjoy a walk in the neighborhood as a break from a visit with an elderly aunt.

There may be activities that you would like your child to be involved in that are simply not a good match for your child. A child with a very short attention span may have a difficult time during story hour at the library. A child that enjoys quiet, individual activities, may be unhappy playing on a soccer team. When you are planning an activity for your child, there are several things to consider. Plan activities for your child based on his age as well as his interests and abilities. However, sometimes you may need to also consider the importance of the activity to your child's social and cognitive growth. For example, a child that prefers playing alone may need to be involved in some social or play activities to develop better social skills.

And finally, don't hesitate when the planning and carrying out of some activities becomes too difficult to avoid the situation. Arrange for babysitting or shop while another family member can watch your child. Visit relatives and friends when your child is in school or ask for help from neighbors, community service groups or respite care agencies. You may be able to set up a time when you will watch a neighbor's child in exchange for some time when she will watch your child. Keep in mind that although avoiding the situation is a good way to make your day easier, it does not give your child the opportunity to learn how to act in the situation. If it is a situation that your child eventually needs to participate in, plan ways in the future to slowly get your child used to the situation by making short visits, taking an extra person along or making more frequent visits.

(Refer back to the Activity Sheet so we can plan appropriate activities during our two activities. Review the car trip example and ask for ideas for planning appropriate activities when grocery shopping with a young child.)

SCHEDULING ACTIVITIES

Let's continue with example #6 on the Example Sheet for this next section on scheduling activities.

> *Keith and Becky plan to leave their house at about 5:00 AM. They have done this before and found that the children will typically go right back to sleep when they get in the car and will sleep for a few hours. With the stops that they have planned, there won't be more than two or three hours of straight driving.*

In this example, Keith and Becky have thought about the best time and length of time for the trip to decrease the chance of undesirable behaviors. The first thing that they have done is to plan this activity for a time of day when the undesirable behaviors are less likely to occur. One of the desired behaviors they identified was that they would like the children to sleep in the car. Leaving early in the morning will make this more likely.

If the children do not fall back to sleep, they will probably be well rested because they will have slept all night. Its important to consider how tired or cranky your child is at different times of the day. You may want to schedule a difficult activity at a time when both you and your child are well rested. Undesirable behaviors will be less likely to happen and you will have more energy to thoroughly plan and structure the activity.

Scheduling activities at consistent and routine times may also help. For example, if your child knows that bedtime is always at 9:00 PM, right after her bath, there may be less whining and trying to get out of going to bed. Having a routine and consistent time schedule of activities for your child helps her know what to expect and what will be expected of her during a specified time period. Now let's refer back to the Activity Sheet to plan scheduling of activities for these two examples. *(Review the example and ask for ideas for the scheduling of a grocery shopping trip with a young child.)*

MODEL AND REWARD DESIRED BEHAVIOR

One of the most important things to remember when planning a difficult activity is to frequently reward your child when he does what you want him to do. Let's take a look at example #7 now:

> *Periodically throughout the trip, Keith or Becky pull out a special unexpected treat like a bag of cheese curls or a new audio tape for the car player. These are pulled out when all of the children are playing quietly. The parents also frequently praise the children for good behavior.*

Catch your child being good. That's what Keith and Becky are doing in this example. Try to reward for good behavior more often than you respond to undesirable behaviors. Also, try to start off on a positive note. In other words, begin to reward your child for good behavior before the undesirable behavior happens.

When there are other children with you during a certain activity, you may be able to reinforce their good behavior or use them as models for desired behavior. When a child hears or sees another child get reinforced for a certain behavior, she may try to get the same reinforcement by imitating the desired behavior. Keith or Becky may say to Dean "Thanks for putting that toy away". This would work as a reinforcer for Dean and a reminder to Will to put his toys away when he is finished.

You may also want to use Grandma's Rule as part of the activity. This rule states "You do what I want you to do, then you can do what you want to do". For example, you may say to your child "When you play quietly with that toy for awhile, then we can go out for a walk". Remember to consider your child's ability to understand this type of statement and how long your child could wait for the reinforcement when planning the activity. Remember to plan ahead. Don't wait until the undesirable behaviors happen before you begin to use "Grandma's Rule."

Let's plan for modeling and rewarding behavior with the two examples on the Activity Sheet. *(Review the example and ask for ideas for rewarding behavior during a grocery shopping trip.)*

ESTABLISH CLEAR RULES AND CONSEQUENCES

Now look at example #8:

> *At the beginning of the trip and periodically throughout the trip, Keith and Becky remind the children of two important rules for the car. One is to play or talk quietly and the other is to stay in your seatbelt at all times.*

It is important during difficult activities that children know what is expected of them. Establishing clear rules and explaining them to children in simple, positive terms will help your child understand what you want them to do. For example, if a child has a tendency to run ahead of your when you are walking in the shopping mall, the "rule" might be "Hold Mommy's hand" rather than "no running". This is stated positively so that the child knows what is expected of him and is not reminded of the undesirable behavior. Be sure to state the rules as the activity begins.

Rules that you set for children should be stated as concretely as possible. Telling a four year old that bedtime is in a half an hour may be less clear than saying "When this TV show is over, it will be time for bed". Telling your child to "stay close to me" at the playground may not be as clear as saying something like "stay inside the fence or stay on this side of the swings". Another example of concrete rules would be to set a kitchen timer to let a child know when it is time to clean up her toys. Concrete objects or events such as obvious endings to activities, physical boundaries, or a bell ringing can help clarify rules for children.

It is a good idea to give your child periodic reminders of what you would like her to be doing. The easiest way to do this is by restating the "rule" while reinforcing her. For example you may say "thanks for remembering to hold my hand."

The number of "rules" for a particular activity should be small so that children can easily remember them and are not overwhelmed. One to three "rules" is a reasonable number for a young child. Let's look at this last area on the Activity Sheet and plan what rules and consequences will be necessary during these two examples. (*Review the example and ask parents for ideas about rules and consequences for the shopping trip.*)

CONCLUSION

These simple strategies may be helpful when you are planning activities for your child. Sometimes five or ten minutes worth of planning can help make a difficult activity more enjoyable for both you and your child. As your child gets older, you may be able to give her more responsibility to plan activities, take along toys and keep more control over her own materials. It is important that older children begin to take on this responsibility. Just as you teach independence in dressing, eating, and playing, teaching your child to independently plan for activities and "keep herself busy" when there is waiting involved is an important goal.

BRINGING IT HOME

Pass out the "Bringing it Home" handout for this module. Go over the directions and discuss responses of those parents that wish to share the information.

SUMMARY

Summarize the session by reviewing the following:

A. Planning for activities that have been difficult in the past may make them easier and more enjoyable for everyone.

B. When you anticipate that there may be problems during a certain activity you can encourage more desired behavior by:

1. planning alternative activities to make the activity more fun and involve the child in the activity,
2. controlling materials
3. planning activities that are appropriate for your child's age, interests and abilities
4. scheduling activities at times of the day when undesirable behaviors are less likely to occur
5. modeling and rewarding desired behavior often, and
6. establishing clear rules and consequences

IN A NUTSHELL

Pass out the "In a Nutshell" handout. Suggest to the parents that they read over the handout as an additional review and that they share the information with family members, other care givers and interested friends.

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

Example Sheet

1. Keith and his wife, Becky, are planning a trip to visit Keith's parents. They will be driving for eight hours with their three children, Dean (8 yr.), Will (3 yr.) And Jane (11 mths.). When they went on this trip just two months ago, it was as Dean described "a disaster." Keith and Becky know that they will have to plan carefully to make sure this is a pleasant trip for everyone.

2. Keith and Becky would like their children to sleep or play quietly during the long car trip. During the trip two months ago, all three children were awake during most of the trip. There were many arguments over toys and quite a bit of crying and trying to get out of seatbelts.

3. Keith and Becky have quite a few ideas for keeping their children busy during the long trip. They have prepared separate bags of toys for each child. Dean (8 yrs.) helped get his own bag ready. He packed three books, a hand held video game and a tape player with headphones. His mother also bought him a map so he can follow the route. Will (3 yr.) Has a coloring book and crayons, his favorite stuffed animal, Disney character dolls and a new picture book. Becky filled Jane's (11mth.) Bag with rattles, a wind up radio, and her blanket. Keith has collected a supply of snacks and juice boxes for the trip.

4. During the last trip Keith and his family took to visit his parents, they felt that there was no control in the car. Toys were scattered everywhere, the boys were throwing food at each other and the baby keep putting small toys in her mouth. Dean and Will were grabbing toys from each other and arguing almost constantly. To keep more control over materials, Becky plans to hold Will and Jane's bags and give out one item at a time. She will also remind Dean to put things away when he is done so that their children will not bother with them. Becky plans to keep all of the snacks in the front seat with her. Keith and Becky were careful to avoid toys like small cars that Will and Dean often argue over and Lego blocks that Jane may put in her mouth.

5. Becky and Keith have planned several stops along the way to make the long car trip a little easier for their young family. They know of a fast food restaurant along the way that has a very nice playground and plan to stop there for breakfast. They have packed a picnic and will stop at a picnic ground for lunch and to let the children run around a little. Another quick stop is planned at a roadside rest stop for the afternoon.

6. Keith and Becky plan to leave their house at about 5:00 a.m. They have done this before and found that the children will typically go right back to sleep when they get in the car and will sleep for a few hours. With the stops that they have planned, there won't be more than two or three hours of straight driving.

7. Periodically throughout the trip, Keith or Becky pull out a special unexpected treat like a bag of cheese curls or a new audio tape for car tape player. These are pulled out when all of the children are playing quietly. The parents also frequently praise the children for good behavior.

8. At the beginning of the trip and periodically throughout the trip, Keith and Beck remind the children of two important rules for the car. One is to play or talk quietly and the other is to stay in your seatbelt at all times.

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

Activity Sheet

Fill in the chart indicating how you could use these strategies for a trip to the grocery store with your child.

ACTIVITY	LONG CAR TRIP	GROCERY SHOPPING
ANTICIPATE PROBLEMS -List what you would like your child to be doing. -List possible undesirable behaviors that may occur during an activity.	Would like children to sleep or play quietly. Children may argue, cry or try to get out of seatbelts.	
PLAN ALTERNATIVE ACTIVITIES -Make activity more fun -Involve child in activity -Bring toys or snacks along -Set aside special items	Bring along snacks and: Dean-books, video game tape player. Will-coloring book, crayons, stuffed animal, dolls, book. Jane-rattles, radio, blanket	
CONTROL MATERIALS -Control how quickly materials are used -Put away things as they are used -Keep some things out of reach -Childproof	Parents hold younger children's bags. Reminders to put things away. Keep snacks in front seat. Avoid small cars and lego blocks.	
PLAN APPROPRIATE ACTIVITIES -Break up long activities -Plan activities, according to your child's age, interests and abilities	Plan several stops: Fast food restaurant with playground, picnic lunch, stop at roadside rest.	
SCHEDULING ACTIVITIES -Schedule at times of day when undesirable behaviors are less likely to occur -Schedule when both you and your child are well-rested -Schedule at consistent and routine times.	Leave house at 5 a.m. so children will sleep. No more than 2-3 hours straight driving.	
MODEL AND REWARD DESIRED BEHAVIORS -Catch your child being good -Reinforce other children -Use Grandma's Rule	Special, unexpected treats of cheese curls and new audio tape; frequent praise to Will and Dean, play games with Jane.	
ESTABLISH CLEAR RULES AND CONSEQUENCES -State positively -State concretely -Give reminders -Keep number of 'rules' small	Two rules: - Play or talk quietly. - Stay in seatbelt.	

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PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

Bringing It Home

Think about an activity or time of day that is difficult for your child. Plan for this activity using the following chart.

ACTIVITY	
ANTICIPATE PROBLEMS -List what you would like your child to be doing -List possible undesirable behaviors that may occur during activity	
PLAN ALTERNATIVE ACTIVITIES -Make activity more fun -Involve your child in activity -Bring toys or snacks along -Set aside special items	
CONTROL MATERIALS -Control how quickly materials are used -Put away things as used -Keep some things out of reach -Childproof	
PLAN APPROPRIATE ACTIVITIES -Plan activities according to your child's age, interests and abilities -Break up long activities	
SCHEDULING ACTIVITIES -Schedule at times of day when undesirable behaviors are less likely to occur -Schedule when both you and your child are well rested -Schedule at consistent and routine times	
MODEL AND REWARD DESIRED BEHAVIOR -Catch your child being good -Reinforce other children -Use Grandma's Rule	
ESTABLISH CLEAR RULES AND CONSEQUENCES -State positively -State concretely -Give reminders -Keep number of "rules" small	

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

In a Nutshell

A. Planning for activities that have been difficult in the past may make them easier and more enjoyable for everyone.

B. When you anticipate that there may be problems during a certain activity you can encourage more desired behavior by:

1. planning alternative activities to make the activity more fun and involve the child in the activity,
2. controlling materials
3. planning activities that are appropriate for your child's age, interests and abilities
4. scheduling activities at times of the day when undesirable behaviors are less likely to occur
5. modeling and rewarding desired behavior often, and
6. establishing clear rules and consequences

On the next page is a blank chart like the one you used for the "Bringing it Home" activity. You may find this useful when planning activities for your child.

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

In a Nutshell

ACTIVITY	
ANTICIPATE PROBLEMS -List what you would like your child to be doing -List possible undesirable that may occur during activity	
PLAN ALTERNATIVE ACTIVITIES -Make activity more fun -Involve your child in activity -Bring toys or snacks along -Set aside special items	
CONTROL MATERIALS -Control how quickly materials are used -Put things away as used -Keep some things out of reach -Childproof	
PLAN APPROPRIATE ACTIVITIES -Plan activities according to your child's age, interests and abilities -Break up long activities	
SCHEDULE ACTIVITIES -Schedule at times of day when undesirable behaviors are less likely to occur -Schedule when both you and your child are well rested -Schedule at consistent and routine times	
MODEL AND REWARD DESIRED BEHAVIOR -Catch your child being good -Reinforce other children -Use Grandma's Rule	
ESTABLISH CLEAR RULES AND CONSEQUENCES -State positively -State concretely -Give reminders -Keep number of 'rules' small	

LEAP PRESCHOOL

STAFF SKILL TRAINING PROGRAM

MODULE #6: Responding to Children's Undesirable Behaviors

Main Ideas

- Why Children Continue Undesirable Behaviors
- Ways to Respond to Undesirable Behaviors
- Deciding Which Strategy to Use

INTRODUCTION

"I wish my child would stop doing that." You have probably all said that about one (or more) of your child's behaviors. Screaming, whining, hand-waving, and hitting are all examples of behaviors that parents would like their children to stop, or at least do less often. Professionals often refer to these behaviors as inappropriate, undesirable, or problem behaviors. It doesn't matter, all you know is you want them to stop. There are four types of behaviors that parents are typically concerned about. These are: 1) a behavior that is dangerous or may result in the child hurting himself or others, 2) a behavior that may result in objects, toys, furniture, or other materials being damaged or destroyed, 3) a behavior that interferes with the child or another person's learning, and 4) a behavior that is annoying or disruptive to the parent or other people. Today, we will be discussing ways to respond to behaviors such as these.

"Why Does This Child Do That?"

Think about something that your child does that you don't like. Can you remember the very first time it happened? Chances are you can't. Why did your child do it that very first time? There are a lot of reasons a child might "try out" a new behavior. Sometimes it's just an accident, like dropping an egg on the floor. Or, out of frustration, a child may throw the pieces of a puzzle. A child with limited language may cry when he wants a certain toy. A child that is not paying attention, may walk into the street. Children are active learners. They learn through play, exploration, and interactions with people. In the process, they try a lot of things. When a child does one of these behaviors that first time, whether through frustration, an accident, play, exploration, or communication, we probably don't consider it a problem. It's when it starts happening over and over that parents become frustrated and begin to wonder how to get it to stop. So if the first question was "Why did my child do that in the first place?," the next question would be "Why does my child continue to do it?"

Remember in a past session that we said that what happens right after a behavior (the consequence) will determine if the behavior continues or increases in the future. Children continue behaviors because of what happened when they tried it in the past. A child who drops an egg on the floor may like that squishy sound. Seeing that slimy colorful egg on the floor may make him want to try it again. A child who absent mindedly walks into the street may enjoy the attention he receives from his mother and the next door neighbor as they come running to get him. In other words, the child receives some kind of reinforcement for the behavior he tries, so he continues to do it.

Although it is not always a simple task, it is important to try to figure out what is reinforcing the behavior. If we can determine what is rewarding the behavior, it will be easier to decide how to respond to the behavior in the future. *(Write on the board "Things that cause behaviors to continue:")* Let's look at a few descriptions of children and see if we can identify reinforcers that cause behaviors to continue. *(Pass out Activity Sheet).* Read the first example:

> *Nathan's mom Julie was washing the kitchen floor. Nathan wanted her to play a game of ball with him and kept repeating over and over "play ball, play ball, play ball." This repetition began to annoy Julie so she stopped cleaning and played ball with Nathan.*

Ask yourself the following questions:

a) What do you think Julie would like Nathan to stop doing or do less often?
Response: *Repeating "Play ball, Play ball."*

b) What was happening when Nathan started to repeat "play ball"? What was the antecedent? *Response:* *Mom washing floor.*

c) What happened after Nathan repeated "play ball"? What was the consequence? *Response:* *Mom played ball with Nathan.*

In this example, Julie gave Nathan attention when he repeated "play ball" over and over. So one type of reinforcer that may cause a behavior to continue is attention. Now read Example 1b. from the Activity Sheet. *(Give time to read)*

> *At the grocery store, Andy asked for a candy bar. His mother Joni said "You can't have a candy bar now, it's almost dinner time". Andy asked for it again and again and began to whine and cry. Joni wanted some peace and quiet so she said "OK, OK, but you better eat your dinner tonight" and gave him the candy.*

Ask the following questions:

a) What do you think Joni would like Andy to stop doing or do less often? *Response:* *Whining and crying for candy.*

b) What was happening when Andy began to whine and cry? What was the antecedent? *Response: Grocery shopping*

c) What happened following the whining and crying? What was the consequence? *Response: Candy bar*

Andy's whining and crying was followed by his mom giving him a candy bar. Receiving a reward following a behavior may cause the behavior to continue. *(List "1. Attention or rewards" on the board.)* Read the next example from the Activity Sheet. (*Give time to read.*)

> *Emily hated to have her hair washed and would often kick and scream. Sometimes when her father was bathing her and she began to kick and scream, he would decide not to wash her hair that day.*

a) What do you think Emily's father would like Emily to stop doing or do less often? *Response: Kicking and screaming*

b) What would happen before the kicking and screaming? What was the antecedent? *Response: Father trying to wash her hair*

c) What would her father sometimes do when she began kicking and screaming in circle? What was the consequence? *Response: Getting out of having her hair washed*

In this example, the behavior of kicking and screaming will probably continue because Emily is sometimes getting out of doing something she dislikes. Another reinforcer that causes behaviors to continue is getting out of something unpleasant or escaping from a task. (*List "2. Escape from task" on* *the board.)* Read example three from the Activity Sheet.(*Give time to read.*)

> *Wyatt would often lie on the floor and roll a car in front of his eyes. He enjoyed watching the wheels spin. The behavior occurred when his parents were in or out of the room.*

a) What do you think Wyatt's parents would like him to stop doing or do less often? *Response: Lying on floor, rolling car in front of eyes.*

b) What is happening when Wyatt rolls the car in front of his eyes? *Response: Lying on the floor with car.*

c) What is reinforcing about this activity? What is the consequence? *Response: Watching the wheels spin.*

The consequence in this example is the activity itself. The activity of watching the wheels spin is reinforcing to Wyatt. The activity is self reinforcing. *(List "self-reinforcing activities" on the board.)* Many children are soothed or comforted by self reinforcing behaviors such as thumb sucking, nail biting, or twirling hair with fingers. Some children's self reinforcing behaviors are less common such as head banging, hand waving, or finger flicking. Parents may want their child to stop the behaviors or do them less often when they begin to interfere with learning opportunities, or when the child is actually hurting himself. Other types of self reinforcing activities may include coloring on the wall, playing with mom's make-up or dad's shaving cream or noisily bouncing a ball against a wall.

(Summarize this section by reviewing the list on the board: "Things that cause behaviors to continue:")

1. Attention or rewards
2. Escape from task
3. Self-reinforcing activities

Reinforce to Increased Desired Behavior

For every behavior you would like your child to do less often, there is a desired behavior to take its place. For example, if you would like your son to stop throwing toys, you would probably like to replace that behavior with playing appropriately with toys or putting them away quietly. Whenever you identify a behavior you would like to do less often, think about what you can begin to reward or teach that will take its place.

Sometimes the only plan for change for a behavior you would like to decrease will be to teach your child how to do a skill or communicate a need. Let's look at the examples on the Activity Sheet and see if we can identify the alternative behavior or a skill that could be reinforced to take the place of the behavior the parent would like to decrease. Read example number one again. (*Give time to read.*)

> *Nathan's mom Julie was washing the kitchen floor. Nathan wanted her to play a game with him and kept repeating over and over "play ball, play ball, play ball." This repetition began to annoy Julie so she stopped cleaning and played ball with Nathan.*

(Ask the following question:)

> *What could Nathan's mom Julie reinforce to take the place of repeating "play ball, play ball?"*

Possible responses: Asking one time, waiting for attention, independent play.

At the grocery store, Andy asked for a candy bar. His mother, Joni said, "You can't have a candy bar now, it's almost dinner time." Andy asked for it again and again and began to whine and cry. Joni wanted some peace and quiet so she said "Oh, OK, but you better eat your dinner tonight" and gave him the candy."

(Ask the following question:)

What could Andy's mom, Joni, reinforce to take the place of crying and whining?

Possible responses: Sitting quietly in cart, talking quietly.

Emily hated to have her hair washed and would often kick and scream. Sometimes, when her father was bathing her and she began to kick and scream, he would decide not to wash her hair that day.

(Ask the following question:)

What could Emily's father reinforce to take the place of kicking and screaming during hair washing?

Possible responses: Sitting still and quiet in tub.

Wyatt would often lie on the floor and roll a car in front of his eyes. He enjoyed watching the wheels spin. The behavior occurred when his parents were in or out of the room.

(Ask the following questions:)

What could Wyatt's parents reinforce to take the place of lying on the *floor and rolling a car in front of his eyes?*

Possible responses: *Sitting while playing with cars, pushing car to parent.*

You can either wait until the desired behavior happens to give attention or a reinforce, or you can actively teach the behavior. It is important that this positive attention be planned before deciding how to respond to the behavior to be decreased. It is also important to think about ways to plan activities to decrease the likelihood of the undesirable behavior occurring in the first place. *(Pass out the Example Sheet).* Let's read Example #1:

Min's daughter Kimi rips pages out of her books. Many of her books are ruined. She has also ripped her parents' and brother's books. Min is very concerned. Before deciding on how to respond to this, she has decided to try to reorganize the books in her house so that they are not readily available to Kimi. Min has placed some cardboard page books on a shelf that Kimi can reach. Min has also begun to sit and read with Kimi more often and is teaching her to turn pages in a book slowly and carefully. Whenever Min sees Kimi turning pages in a book carefully, she praises her.

Before you begin to plan a consequence for an undesirable behavior, follow these steps:

1. Identify an alternative behavior to take its place.
2. Teach and/or reinforce the alternative behavior.
3. Look at the structure of the environment and the activity and think about ways to prevent the behavior from happening.

Note: Refer to session #5: Planning Activities to Increased Desired Behavior and/or Session #8: How to Teach Your Child New Skills for further review.

How to Respond to Undesirable behaviors

Despite all of your teaching and preplanning, the behavior you want your child to do less often may continue. Let's take a look at three ways to respond when this happens. The three strategies we'll be discussing are 1) interruption and redirection, 2) ignoring, and 3) response cost. *(Write "How to Respond to Unwanted Behavior")* on the board. The first of these procedures is called interruption and redirection. *(List "1. Interrupt and redirect on the board.*) Interruption and redirection is a strategy that you can use to reduce a behavior which involves some type of physical action. Interruption and redirection is a three-step procedure. The steps are:

a) interrupt your child's behavior,

b) direct your child to do the desired behavior, and

c) praise your child for doing or attempting the desired behavior.

It is important when using interruption and redirection to give no verbal attention to the behavior you want to decrease. Provide verbal attention only to the desired behavior. The benefit of using interruption and redirection is that it teaches your child what not to do with minimal attention to the misbehavior. And, just as importantly, it teaches your child what you do want her to do.

attention to the misbehavior. And, just as importantly, it teaches your child what you do want her to do.

Let's look at an example of how interruption and redirection can be used to decrease a child's behavior. (*Ask a parent to volunteer to play the role of the child as you play the role of the parent. Model how to use interruption and redirection for the example listed below.)*

Example 1.

Child *(Played by the Parent)*	*Teacher* *(Played by the Presenter)*
At the breakfast table, the child is sitting in front of bowl of cereal and spoon, banging the spoon on the table.	*1) Interruption - the parent stops the child from banging the spoon by placing his hand on the child's hand. The parent does not comment on the banging.* *2) Redirection - the parent physically guides the child to eat with the spoon. He also verbally directs the child by saying "Eat with your spoon."* *3) Praising - the parent says "good, you are eating with your spoon."*

Ask another volunteer to play the role of parent as you play the role of child for the next example.

Example 2.

Child *(Played by the presenter)*	*Teacher* *(Played by parent)*
Child sits at a table with a puzzle and waves hand in front of eyes instead of playing with the puzzle.	*1) Interruption - parent physically stops the child from hand waving by placing her hand on the child's hands. The parent does not comment on the child's behavior.* *2) Redirection - the parent physically guides the child to play with the puzzle and verbally directs the child by saying, "Put this piece in."* *3) Praising - the parent says "You are doing a great job with that puzzle."*

There is a behavior strategy that is called extinction where you stop giving attention or rewards for a behavior that has been rewarded in the past. If you stop giving attention to the behavior, this means you ignore your child when he does the behavior. (*List "2. Ignore (extinction) on the board.)* When your child's behavior has been rewarded with attention in the past and you stop giving the attention, the behavior will decrease. Look at Example #2 on the Example Sheet.

> *Jasmine is three years old and just beginning to use some words. Ever since she was an infant, she has cried when she was hungry and her mother or father would give her some snack food. Because she is beginning to talk, her parents would like her to ask for snacks, rather than crying and are teaching her to say "eat" or name the snack she wants. Since just teaching this new skill doesn't seem to be decreasing the crying, Jasmine's parents have*

decided to also ignore Jasmine and turn away from her when she begins to cry for food. When she quiets down, they prompt her to say "eat".

Jasmine's parents, in this example, are ignoring the behavior of crying which has in the past always been given attention.

It sounds easy to ignore a behavior that you would like your child to decrease. You don't have to do anything. But it's not quite that simple. There are some very important guidelines to think about before deciding to ignore a behavior.

1. Only ignore behaviors that have been rewarded with attention. Behaviors that are self-reinforcing or used to escape from a task will not be affected by extinction.

2. To effectively decrease your child's behavior, you will have to be consistent. This means if you decide to ignore a child's whining, you will have to ignore it every time.

3. Ignoring a behavior will only work if you are in control of everything that has been reinforcing the behavior. For example, ignoring your child's loud screaming when other children are laughing and joining in with it will probably be ineffective.

4. Only use ignoring for behaviors that you can ignore. You cannot ignore behaviors if someone or something may get hurt. Also, if your child's behavior is so annoying to you that it is difficult for you to consistently ignore it, you may want to try something else.

5. When you first begin ignoring a behavior, your child may try harder to get your attention and do the behavior more often. This actually means that ignoring is working so keep it up.

6. Always reinforce the desired behavior that you would rather have your child do.

These guidelines are part of the "In A Nutshell" handout. You can refer to them when you are thinking about ignoring one of your child's behaviors.

Another type of extinction is when you stop giving a reward for a behavior that has been reinforced in the past. An example of this would be the parent that stops giving candy or treats to a child each time he whines for it at the store.

Another way to respond to a behavior you would like your child to do less often is to take away a desired object or privilege. This is called response cost. *(List "#3. Take away a desired object or privilege (Response Cost)" on the board.)* Now let's read Example #3 on the Example Sheet:

> *Jane and her brother John were playing with a truck, pushing it back and forth. Jane decided to stop the game and push the truck in the sandbox. John wanted a turn too, and tried to pull the truck away. Jane and John were struggling over the truck when their father came outside to check on them. He took the truck away and said "You need to share toys." After a few minutes he gave the truck back and again reminded them to share.*

Just like adults get "fined" for speeding or teenagers get grounded for staying out late, taking away a desired object or privilege is an effective way to respond to your child's undesirable behavior. Again, there are some important guidelines to remember:

1. Only take away desired objects or privileges for behaviors that occur occasionally. Since taking away a desired object or privilege creates a negative interaction, a different strategy should be used for a behavior that happens more frequently.
2. The desired object or privilege that you take away should be reasonable and closely related to your child's undesirable behavior.

If your child colors on the walls with crayons, you would remove the crayons rather than saying you can't watch TV.

3. With young children, taking away the object or privilege should occur immediately after the undesirable behavior. If you tell your child that he can't go swimming this weekend for misbehaving on Tuesday, he may not even remember why he's being punished.

4. Sometimes a child misbehaves with a toy because he does not know how to play with it. In this case, interruption and redirection would be the better strategy to try. It would help to teach the child the right way to use the toy. Taking away the toy would only teach her what not to do.

5. Always reinforce the desired behavior that you would rather have your child do.

Again, these special guidelines are included in the "In a Nutshell" handout. Refer to this sheet before you decide to use this strategy. (*Review this section by reviewing the information on the board: "How to Respond to Unwanted Behavior:"*)

1. Interrupt and redirect
2. Ignore (Extinction)
3. Take away a reinforcer (Response Cost)

Deciding Which Way You Will Respond

Although there are no "hard and fast" rules for selecting a procedure for a specific child behavior, there are some guidelines that may be helpful. We said earlier that the unwanted behavior may be reinforced by 1) attention or rewards, 2) getting out of a task or activity, or 3) self reinforcement. Thinking about what is reinforcing the behavior can help us choose the best way to respond to decrease the behavior. If your child's undesirable behavior is being reinforced by attention and rewards, what could you do to decrease the behavior? *(Possible response: Stop giving the attention or rewards).* So, if your child always whines for you to take him, you could ignore the behavior.

If your child's undesirable behavior is being reinforced because she gets out of doing an activity or task she doesn't like, what could you do? *(Possible response: Require that she complete the activity).* So if your daughter always throws her toys to get out of cleaning them up, you could use interruption and redirection by stopping the throwing and prompting her to pick up the toys. Then you could praise her when she picked them up independently.

Finally, if your child's undesirable behavior is self-reinforcing, how could you respond to decrease the behavior? *(Possible response: Stop the behavior or take away the reinforcement).*

For self-reinforcing motor behaviors such as hand-waving or finger flicking, you would probably use interruption and redirection by stopping the behavior and prompting the child to do something appropriate with his hands. However when the self-reinforcing activity is something like coloring on the walls or dropping eggs on the floor, you may want to take away a reinforcer. This again is called response cost.

Summarize this section by reviewing the following:

a. If your child's undesirable behavior is being reinforced by attention or rewards, ignoring the behavior will decrease the behavior.

b. If your child's undesirable behavior is being reinforced because he gets out of an activity or task, requiring him to complete the task will decrease the behavior.

c. If your child's undesirable behavior is self-reinforcing, ignoring the behavior will not make it happen less often. Interruption and redirection or taking away a reinforcer will decrease the behavior.

d. Always remember to reinforce desired behaviors that you would rather have your child do when you are using any strategy to decrease unwanted behavior.

Bringing it Home

Pass out the "Bringing it Home" handout for this session. Go over the directions and discuss responses of those parents that wish to share the information.

SUMMARY

Summarize the session by reviewing the following:

A. Children continue undesirable behaviors because they are in some way reinforced.

B. Reinforcers that cause undesirable behaviors to continue include:

1. attention and rewards
2. escape from a task
3. self reinforcing

C. Identifying the reinforcer that follows the undesirable behavior can help us decide what strategies to use.

D. The strategies for reducing undesirable behavior that we discussed include:

1. interruption and redirection
2. ignoring or extinction
3. taking away a reinforcer/response cost

E. Always remember to reinforce desired behaviors when you are using any strategies to decrease unwanted behavior.

In a Nutshell

Pass out the "In a Nutshell" handout. Suggest to the parents that they read over the handout as an additional review and that they share the information with family members, other care givers, and interested friends.

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

Bringing It Home

Fill in the following information:

One behavior I would like my child to do less often is: ____________________

____

____

Why might my child continue to do this?

a. attention or a reward
b. escape from a task
c. self reinforcing

The behavior I would rather see my child do is: __________________________

____

How can I reinforce this desired behavior? ______________________________

____

The strategy I can use to decrease the undesirable behavior is:

a. interruption and redirection
b. ignoring (extinction)
c. taking away a desired object or privilege (response cost)

Three things I will consider when using this strategy are:

1. __________________________
2. __________________________
3. __________________________

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

Activity Sheet

1. *Nathan's mom Julie was washing the kitchen floor. Nathan wanted her to play a game with him and kept repeating over and over "play ball, play ball, play ball." This repetition began to annoy Julie so she stopped cleaning and played ball with Nathan.*

What would Julie like Nathan to stop doing or do less often?

____

What was the antecedent?____

What was the consequence?_______________________________________

What could Julie reinforce to take the place of repeating "play ball, play ball?" ____

2. *At the grocery store, Andy asked for a candy bar. His mother, Joni said "You can't have a candy bar now, it's almost dinner time." Andy asked for it again and again and began to whine and cry. Joni wanted some peace and quiet so she said "Oh, OK, but you better eat your dinner tonight" and gave him the candy.*

What would Joni like Andy to sop doing or do less often?_________________

What was the antecedent?____

What was the consequence?_______________________________________

3. *Emily hated to have her hair washed and would often kick and scream. Sometimes, when her father, Jonathan, was bathing her and she began to kick and scream, he would decide not to wash her hair that day.*

What would Jonathan like Emily to stop doing or do less often?

____

What was the antecedent?______________________________

What was the consequence?_____________________________

What could Jonathan reinforce to take the place of kicking and screaming?

____

4. *Wyatt would often lie on the floor and roll a car in front of his eyes. He enjoyed watching the wheels spin. The behavior was no different if his parents were in or out of the room.*

What would Wyatt's parents like him to stop doing or do less often?

____

What was the antecedent?______________________________

What was the consequence?_____________________________

What could Wyatt's parents reinforce to take the place of lying on the floor and rolling a car in front of the eyes?_______________________

____

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

Example Sheet

1. Min's daughter Kimi rips pages out of her books. Many of her books are ruined. She has also ripped her parents' and brother's books. Min is very concerned. Before deciding on how to respond to this, she has decided to try to reorganize the books in her house so that they are not readily available to Kimi. Min has placed some cardboard page books on a shelf that Kimi can reach. Min has also begun to sit and read with Kimi more often and is teaching her to turn pages in a book slowly and carefully. Whenever Min sees Kimi turning pages in books carefully, she praises her.

2. Jasmine is three years old and just beginning to use some words. Ever since she was an infant, she has cried when she was hungry and her mother or father would give her some food. Because she is beginning to talk, her parents would like her to ask for snacks, rather than crying and are teaching her to say "eat" or name the snack she wants. Since just teaching this new skill doesn't seem to be decreasing the crying, Jasmine's parents have decided to also ignore Jasmine and turn away from her when she begins to cry for food. When she quiets down, they prompt her to say "eat."

3. Jane and her brother John were playing with a truck, pushing it back and forth. Jane decided to stop the game and push the truck in the sandbox. John wanted a turn too, and tried to pull the truck away. Jane and John were struggling over the truck when their father came outside to check on them. He took the truck away and said, "You need to share toys." After a few minutes he gave the truck back and again reminded them to share.

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

In a Nutshell

1. Four types of behaviors that parents would typically like their children to stop or do less often are:

   a. Something that is dangerous or may result in the child hurting himself or others,
   b. Something that may result in objects, toys or other materials being damaged or destroyed
   c. Something that interferes with the child or another person's learning
   d. Something that is annoying to the parent or other children

2. Children often continue undesirable behaviors because they are reinforced in some way. Some things that may cause undesirable behaviors to continue are:

   a. Attention or rewards
   b. Escape from a task
   c. Self reinforcing activities

3. Three strategies that can be used to reduce undesirable behaviors are:

   a. Interruption and redirection
   b. Ignoring (extinction)
   c. Taking away a reinforcer (response cost)

4. Here are some things to consider when deciding which strategy to use:

   a. If your child's undesirable behavior is being reinforced by attention or rewards, ignoring the behavior will decrease the behavior

   b. If your child's undesirable behavior is being reinforced because the child gets out of an activity or task, requiring the child to complete the task will decrease the behavior.

   c. If your child's undesirable behavior is self-reinforcing, ignoring the behavior will not make it happen less often. Interruption and redirection or taking away a reinforcer will decrease the behavior.

   d. Always remember to reinforce desired behaviors that you would rather have your child do when you are using any strategy to decrease undesirable behavior.

SUPPLEMENTAL HANDOUTS

INTERRUPTION AND REDIRECTION

What is Interruption and redirection?

Interruption and redirection is a three-step procedure; the steps include: a) stopping your child's behavior, b) directing your child to do a desired behavior and c) praising your child for the desired behavior.

An Example of using interruption and redirection:

Child	**Parent**
The child is sitting on the floor throwing blocks.	Interruption: Parent physically stop the child from throwing toys be placing her hand on the child's hands. The parent does not comment on the behavior.
	Redirection: The parent physically guides the child to build with the blocks and verbally directs the child by saying, "Put this block on."
	Praising: The parent praises the child for playing with the blocks.

Some guidelines for using interruption and redirection:

1. Interrupt the behavior as soon as you see it happen.

2. Do not comment on the undesirable behavior.

3. Use interruption and redirection when you cannot ignore the misbehavior and when you want to teach a desired behavior.

4. Interruption and redirection can be used for a variety of misbehavior that are reinforced by attention, rewards, getting out of an activity and self-reinforcing behaviors.

IGNORING YOUR CHILD'S BEHAVIOR (EXTINCTION)

What is extinction?

When you stop giving attention or rewards for a behavior that has been reinforced in the past, this is called extinction. Ignoring a behavior that has been given attention in the past is one type of extinction. When a behavior has been rewarded with attention in the past and you stop giving the attention, the behavior will decrease.

An example of ignoring a behavior:

Zachary was three years old when he heard his older cousin swearing. Zachary began to swear in imitation. At first his parents laughed, thinking it was funny for such a young child to use those words. When Zachary kept doing it though, they decided that they better begin to ignore it and asked the rest of the family to ignore it too. After a few days, with no attention given to the swearing, it gradually decreased.

Some guidelines when ignoring a behavior:

1. Ignore your child's behaviors that have been rewarded with attention. Behaviors that are self-reinforcing or escape from task will not be affected by extinction.

2. To effectively decrease your child's behavior, you will have to be consistent. This means if you decide to ignore your child's whining, you will have to ignore it every time it he does it.

3. Ignoring a behavior will only work if you are in control of everything that has been reinforcing the behavior. For example, ignoring your child's loud screaming when other children are laughing and joining in with it may be ineffective.

4. Only use ignoring for behaviors that you can ignore. You cannot ignore behaviors if someone or something may get hurt. Also, if your child's behavior is so annoying to you that it is difficult for you to consistently ignore it, you may want to try something else.

5. When you first begin ignoring a behavior, your child may try harder to your attention and do the behavior more often. This actually means that ignoring is working so keep it up.

6. Always reinforce the desired behavior that you would rather have your child do.

TAKING AWAY A DESIRED OBJECT OR PRIVILEGE (RESPONSE COST)

What is Response Cost?

Taking away a reinforcing object or privilege when an undesirable behavior occurs is called response cost.

An example of taking away a reinforcer:

Antonio and his mother were playing in the backyard. Antonio began to walk down the driveway and his mother told him to stay in the yard. He came back, but started down the driveway just three minutes later. His mom reminded him to stay in the yard and redirected him several times. When Antonio still did not listen, his mother told him he would have to go in the house.

Some guidelines when taking away a reinforcer:

1. Take away desired objects or privileges for behaviors that occur occasionally. Since taking away a desired object or privilege creates a negative interaction, a different strategy should be used for behavior that happen more frequently.

2. The desired object or privilege that you take away should be reasonable and closely related to your child's undesirable behavior. If your child colors on the walls with crayons, you would remove the crayons rather than saying you can't watch TV tonight.

3. With young children, taking away the object or privilege should occur immediately after the undesirable behavior. If you tell your child that he can't go swimming this weekend for misbehaving on Tuesday, he may not even remember why he's being punished.

4. Sometimes a child misbehaves with a toy because he does not know how to play with it. In this case, interruption and redirection would help to teach the child the right way to use the toy. Taking away the toy would only teach her what not to do.

5. Always reinforce the desired behavior that you would rather have your child do.

TIME OUT
Information Sheet and Guidelines

What is Time-Out?

Time-out is an effective, mild punishment procedure that can be used to decrease an undesirable behavior. Time-out means time away from reinforcement (or attention).

When Should Time-Out be Used?

Time-out can be used for undesirable behaviors that are aggressive and/or disruptive. Behaviors such as hitting, kicking, spitting, biting, or throwing objects can be decreased by using time-out. Time-out should be used only after other strategies such as reinforcing alternative behaviors, interruption and redirection and/or extinction have been shown to be ineffective. Time-out is usually not effective for decreasing self-rewarding behaviors or behaviors that result in the child injuring himself.

Where Should Time-Out Take Place?

The time-out area should be:

safe
boring
accessible
visible

Some people use a small chair in a corner. Others have their child sit on the steps or on a couch. Although some people use the child's bedroom for a time-out, others suggest keeping your child's room a safe place, comfortable and secure; not a place of punishment. Your child should not have any toys near him. The TV, radio or tape player should be turned off.

There does not have to be a special place for the time-out. Your child can sit on the floor, in a chair, or on the grass if you are outside.

How Long Should Time-Out Last?

Time-out should last a short amount of time. The longest time should be one minute for each year of the child's life; a three-year-old would be in time-out for three minutes, a five-year-old for five minutes, etc. Even shorter amounts of time, one to two minutes, are effective.

What Should I Do if the Child Resists?

If your child resists going to the time-out area, gently guide him by the hand. If he continues to resist, you may need to use other physical guidance to get him to the area such as picking him up or guiding from the under the arms. If necessary, just have the child sit down on the floor right where he is.

If this resistance turns into a tantrum, ignore you child until the tantrum stops, then tell him that he has a time-out.

If your child leaves the designated area, gently lead him back or walk away and ignore him for the amount of time you have determined. Do not, however, allow him to play with toys or interact with others during this time.

Some Things to Remember About Time-Out?

-Use time-out only for very negative behaviors such as hurting another person or destructive behaviors.

-Use time-out consistently. If you have decided to use time-out for hitting, use it every time your child hits someone.

-While your child is in time-out, ignore his attempts to get your attention.

-While the child needs a time-out, calmly say something like, "You have a time-out for ___________, I'll tell you when you can get up."

-Time outs do not work as well if they are over-used. Save the use of time-out for behaviors that you just cannot ignore.

-It is very important to reward the child for the alternative behavior! This means that if you are using time-out for hitting, you reinforce the child when he plays nicely, or tou

LEAP PRESCHOOL

PARENT SKILL TRAINING PROGRAM

MODULE #7: Deciding What to Teach Your Child

Main Ideas

- ✏Deciding What to Teach Your Child
- ✏Breaking the Skill Down into Easy-to-Learn Steps
- ✏Getting Ready to Teach the New Skill

INTRODUCTION

Parent's are a child's first teacher. You teach your child the skills he needs in everyday life at home and in the community. Parents don't need training to be teachers. It comes naturally. You smile and clap your hands when your child says her first words. You gradually ask your child to do more around the house. And, you constantly introduce new experiences, new people, places and things.

Some children may need some extra help to learn the things that children their own age are typically doing. Children with developmental delays, speech delays, or sensory impairments may have difficulty learning everyday skills without a carefully designed plan for change. Such plans for change may be important for skills that you would like your child to do more often or with less assistance, or when you want your child to replace an undesirable behavior with a new skill. In the next two modules, we will be talking about how to plan to teach these skills and some general strategies for teaching your child. But first let's talk about how to decide what skills you would like your child to learn.

Deciding What to Teach

(Note: Some of the information in this section was adapted from the book, "Steps to Independence: A Skills Training Guide for Parents and Teachers of Children with Special Needs" by Bruce L. Baker and Alan J. Brightman).

How do you decide what to teach your child? Most likely you can think of a list of things you would like your child to communicate. If your child is not talking, you probably want your child to communicate. If your child is not potty trained, you may want your child to learn to use the potty. And, if your child is not feeding himself, you might want him to learn to use a spoon and a fork. But where do you start? Which skill do you teach first? What are reasonable expectations for your child?

Deciding what to teach your child is going to depend on several factors. Think about what you now have to do for your child that she may be able to learn to do for herself. Also, think about what your child would like to learn and what she is ready to learn. You may also want to think about what you could teach your child that may make your life a little easier.

The first question is "What skills do I do for my child? Just think about the many, many things that you and other adults do for your child everyday. Are there some things that your child may be able to do for himself? Skills that young children need to learn are things that children do everyday at home, at school, and in the community like walking on the sidewalk, playing with their brothers and sisters, or opening a door. There are simple skills within daily activities that your child could learn that would make her more independent. *(Pass out Example Sheet.)* Listen to the first example:

Rodney was getting lunch ready for his four-year-old son, Derek. He picked Derek up and placed him in the chair and put a bowl and spoon and a sandwich in front of him. Rodney spooned applesauce in the bowl and put the spoon in Derek's hand. He sat next to Derek and reminded him to "take a bite" for each spoonful of applesauce and bite of sandwich. Whenever Derek dribbled on his chin, Rodney would wipe it with a napkin. And, when Derek was finished, Rodney put the applesauce, bowl, napkin and spoon away.

There are many steps in this activity Rodney is doing for his son. If Rodney wanted to begin to teach Derek something during lunch, what two things would you suggest he begin with that would encourage Derek to become more independent? *(Allow time for answers.)* Sometimes we are so busy and get so used to doing things for our children that we forget to let them try things by themselves. A child may feel more successful if there is a task or chore or even one step of an activity that he can complete without any help.

The next thing to ask yourself is "What does my child want to learn?" Children often show what they want to learn by trying something by themselves. Young children can be very persistent when trying something new and when that interest is there, you'll be more successful in teaching the skill. If your child begins to try to manipulate the buttons on his tape player, this would be a good time to teach him how to turn it on or off. If your child loves to swing on the swing set, you could teach her to get on and off the swing by herself. Or, if your child keeps asking you to draw a smiley face, he may like to learn to draw one himself.

It is important to ask yourself "What skills is my child ready to learn?" Children naturally develop some skills before others. Typically, babies learn to crawl first, then to stand and then to walk. What would happen if you tried to teach a baby to walk before she had tried to stand? Probably both you and the baby would be very frustrated. If you try to teach a child a new skill that she is just not ready for, the same thing will happen. So, think about what your child can do now to give you an idea of what your child is ready to learn. In other words, teach a skill that builds on what your child can already do. Let's think about language skills to illustrate this. Look at the second example in the Activity Sheet:

> *Alyssa is five years old and has been able to use one word to name and ask for toys and objects for several months. She can also name colors and shapes. Alyssa's dad, Craig, has been talking to her speech therapist to get some ideas on ways to teach her to ask for things by using at least two words. When they are playing with blocks, Craig holds all the blocks. Alyssa says, "block". Craig holds up a red block and a blue block and says "Which one? Red block or blue block?" Alyssa says "blue". Craig says "Here's a blue block." Alyssa says "blue block" as she and her dad continue to build.*

Alyssa's dad, Craig, is building on the skill of naming things by using one word by teaching Alyssa to put words together to make a phrase or sentence. There are many opportunities for you to do this throughout the day in activities such as dressing, playing, or eating. What can your child already do in these activities? If your child can put on a jacket, the next step could be to teach him to zip it. If your child has learned to use a spoon, it may be time to teach him to use a fork. If your child often plays with simple puzzles at home, more challenging puzzles may be something to try.

OK, now it's time to think about yourself for awhile. "What do you want your child to learn?" Are there skills your child could learn that would make your day a little easier? Teaching independence in daily activities often takes time initially, but eventually gives parents time to answer the phone, cook dinner, clean or visit with a friend. If a child is unable to keep busy with something independently, the time a parent has for these things can be very limited. Teaching a child to play with a toy, look at books, watch TV, color or do puzzles for longer periods of time may give you some time to get other things done. Independence in dressing and eating skills can also make some busy times of the day a little easier.

Sometimes parents would like children to learn skills so that they can participate in more family activities. If the parent or family enjoys art activities, they may want to teach the child gluing, pasting, cutting, and drawing. If the family enjoys going out for dinner, they may want to teach the child to stay in his seat and wait for his meal. If the family enjoys sports, they may be interested in teaching some ball skills such as throwing, catching, or kicking. Integration into community activities and the ability to join in on family hobbies, outings and errands are skills that parents often want for their children.

Here is a final question to ask yourself when deciding what to teach your child is Are there some skills my child can do in some situations but not in others?" Let's look at this question for a moment. Sometimes children learn a new skill in a certain situation but are unable to do it at other times. For example, if you have taught your child to zip his winter coat, you may also need to teach him to zip his sweater, his pants and his sleeping bag. When a child learns a new skill it is not unusual for the skill to be done only with a certain item, person, or in a certain situation. This is particularly true for children with developmental delays. A child may clean up toys at home, but not at school. She may push a car back and forth with her sister, but not a ball with her father or her brother. Can anyone think of an example when your child learned a skill in a certain situation and did not or could not do it other times? *(Allow time for answers.)*

It is important to look for opportunities to teach priority skills throughout the day: in a variety of settings, with a variety of objects, and with a number of different people. When a child learns a skill across these different situations, it is called generalization. Look at Part I of the Activity Sheet. Francine would like to teach her 4 year old daughter to answer yes/no questions. Let's talk about how she could do this in situations listed on the sheet. Go through each situation and give time for parents to discuss.

Now, let's review this section. When deciding what to teach your child, ask yourself these questions:

1. What do I do now for my child?
2. What does my child want to learn?
3. What is my child ready to learn?
4. What do I want my child to learn?
5. Are there skills that my child can do in some situations but not in others?

It would probably be difficult for you and your child to attempt to teach all of these skills all at once. When deciding what you would like your child to learn, it is important to pick a few priority skills to begin with. When you and your child are more comfortable with the new skills you can begin to work on others.

Your are Not Alone

If all of this seems a little mind-boggling, remember that you won't have to make all of these decisions alone. When a child is identified as having a developmental disability, a team of people works together to decide what to teach him. This team of people is called a multidisciplinary team (MDT). It includes people that have evaluated your child, people that have experience teaching young children and, most importantly, you the parents. This team has the responsibility of carefully evaluating your child's strengths and needs and making recommendations concerning what and how to teach your child.

Some members of this team and maybe some additional people will use these recommendations to develop an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for your child. This plan will outline what will be taught to your child, who will be responsible for teaching each skill and what types of support your child will need.

Breaking the skill down

How do children learn these new skills? Let's think about how we all learn new skills. Suppose, for example, that I will want to learn how to bake a cake. Would someone volunteer to tell me how to use a cake mix to bake a cake.

(*Ask the volunteer to begin to give you directions as if you had never baked a cake before. Write each direction on the board. Outline each step that the parent identifies by saying, "so the first step would be...The second step is to..."*)

So learning to bake a cake involves learning many smaller steps such as gather all the ingredients, mixing the ingredients together, turning the oven on, etc. Most skills that children or adults learn are complicated; they can be broken down, step by step.

Breaking down a complicated skill into easy-to-learn steps is called task analysis. When you have decided what to teach your child, the next step is to break the behavior down into smaller steps. In other words, you won't expect a child to do all of the skill at once. If your child has never been asked to put on his own shirt, you may want to ask him to just pull it down over his head. When he can do that very well, you can ask him to pull it down to his waist, and so on.

To break a skill down into smaller steps, you could list the steps from memory, or actually do the behavior yourself and write down each step. You could also watch someone else do the steps and list them. Look at the second part of the Activity Sheet. Let's think about another skill and watch someone to list the steps of undressing when coming in from the outside.

(Put on the coat, hat and mittens.) Now watch while I take off these things and list the steps involved in Part II on the Activity Sheet. *(Slowly remove the items. The steps may be listed as follows:)*

1. *Takes off mittens.*
2. *Takes off hat.*
3. *Unzips coat.*
4. *Pulls on cuff to remove one arm.*
5. *Pulls on cuff to remove other arm.*

Another way to list the steps of a skill you'd like to teach is to actually do the skill yourself and list the steps as you go along. Let's practice doing this. *(Pass out slips of paper and materials as described in the materials section at the beginning of this module.)* Do the skill that is listed on the slip of paper and write down the steps in Part III of the Activity Sheet. *(Give parents time to complete and discuss results when everyone is finished.)*

So, to break down a skill into easy to learn steps, you can 1) list the steps from memory, 2) watch someone else do the skill, or 3) do the skill yourself and list the steps as you go along. Just remember to start out easy and gradually build on what your child is able to do. This will allow your child to learn new skills without undue frustration.

Check it out

Once you have listed the steps of the skill, you need to take a close look at which steps your child can already do. To do this, you can ask your child to do the skill and gradually give more and more help for any steps that your child is unable to do by himself. Then you can jot down how your child did next to each of the steps you've listed. You may need to do this a few times over a couple of days to get a good picture of which steps you'll need to teach.

Think it Through

Now that you have decided what to teach, broke it down into easy to learn steps, and checked which steps your child can already do, look at your list and decide if it is a reasonable place to begin. If there are still several difficult steps involved in teaching the complex skill or if you now feel your child is just not ready to learn this new skill, you may need to step back and either break one or two of these steps down further or begin to work on a skill that is a prerequisite to learning this more complex skill. Here is an example:

Butch wanted to teach his five year old daughter, Dionne, to write her name. He listed the following steps to teach:

1. *Pick up pencil.*
2. *Grip tightly.*
3. *Write a D.*
4. *Write an I.*
5. *Write an O.*
6. *Write an N.*
7. *Write an N.*
8. *Write an E.*

When Butch checked Dionne's ability to do this skill, he found that she easily picked up the pencil, but could not grip it tightly or form any of the letters neatly. He decided to step back and begin to teach this skill by breaking down writing the easiest letters, I, and O, further. Here are the new steps he decided on:

1. *Pick up pencil.*
2. *Grip pencil tightly.*
3. *Draw a line (I).*
4. *Draw a circle (O)*

By thinking the steps through, you may also determine that your child can already do the skill reasonably well and your time would be well spent focussing on other skills at this time.

Conclusion

In summary, when you are deciding what to teach your child, here are the steps you can follow:

1) Decide on a skill to teach.
2) Break it down. Break the skill you want to teach your child down into easy to learn steps.
3) Check it out. Practice the skill with your child and determine which steps your child can already do and which steps you will need to teach.
4) Think it through. Looking at your list of steps and how your child did when you did the check, decide whether 1) your child already can do this skill, 2) this is a good place to begin with your child, 3) there is a need to break one or two of the steps down further. If you need to break some of the steps down further, just go back to step 2 (break it down) and continue through the list.

Bringing it Home

Refer parents to the "Bringing it Home" handout in the Participant's Packet. Go over the directions and discuss responses of those parents that wish to share the information.

Summary

Summarize the session by reviewing the following:

1. When you are deciding what to teach your child, ask yourself these questions:
    a. What do I now do for my child?
    b. What does my child want to learn?
    c. What is my child ready to learn?

   d. What do I want my child to learn?
   e. Are there skills that my child can do in some situations but not in others?

2. Once you have decided to teach your child a new skill, follow these steps:

   a. Break it down. Break the skill you want to teach your child down into easy to learn steps.

   b. Check it out. Practice the skill with your child and determine which steps your child can already to and which steps you will need to teach.

   c. Think it through. Decide whether this is a skill you and your child are ready to work on.

In a Nutshell

Refer parents to the "In a Nutshell" handout. Suggest to parents that they read over the handout as an additional review and that they share the information with family members, other care givers and interested friends.

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

Example Sheet

1. Rodney was getting lunch ready for his four-year-old son, Derek. He picked Derek up and placed him in the chair and put a bowl and spoon and a sandwich in front of him. Rodney spooned the applesauce in the bowl and put the spoon in Derek's hand. He sat next to Derek and reminded him to "take a bite" for each spoonful of applesauce and bite of sandwich. Whenever Derek dribbled on his chin, Rodney would wipe it with a napkin. And when Derek was finished, Rodney put the applesauce, bowl, napkin and spoon away.

2. Alyssa is five years old and has been able to use one word to name and ask for toys and objects for several months. She can also name colors and shapes. Alyssa's dad, Craig, has been talking to her speech therapist to get some ideas on ways to teach her to use longer phrases and sentences. Craig has decided to teach her to ask for toys by using at least two words. When they are playing with blocks, Craig holds all the blocks and says, "What do you want, Alyssa?" Alyssa says, "block." Craig holds up a red block and a blue block and asks, "Which one? Red block or blue block?" Alyssa says, "blue." Craig says, "Say blue block." Alyssa says, "blue block" as she and her dad continue to build.

3. Butch wanted to teach his five year old daughter Dionne to write her name. He listed the following steps to teach:

   1. Pick up pencil.
   2. Grip tightly.
   3. Write a D.
   4. Write an I.
   5. Write an O.
   6. Write an N.
   7. Write an N.
   8. Write an E.

4. When Butch checked his daughter on this skill, he found that she easily picked up the pencil, but could not grip it tightly or form any of the letters neatly. He decided to step back and begin to teach this skill by breaking down writing the easiest letters, I and O, further. Here some new steps he decided on:

   1. Pick up pencil.
   2. Grip pencil tightly.
   3. Draw a line (I).
   4. Draw a circle (O).

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

Activity Sheet

Part I:

Francine would like to teach her 3 year old daughter to answer yes/no questions. Discuss how Francine and others could teach this skill in each of the following situations:

Playing with dolls____
Grocery shopping____
On a walk with Dad____
At bathtime____
At story time at school____________________________________

Part II:

Watch the presenter take off the coat, hat and mittens. List the steps followed:

____
____
____

Part III:

You will be given a slip with a skill to teach. List what the skill is. List the steps to teach as you do the skill yourself.

The skill____
The steps____
____

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

Bringing it Home

Decide on a skill to teach a particular child by thinking about these questions:

1. DECIDE ON A SKILL TO TEACH

What skills do I want to teach my child? Remember to ask yourself those questions to help you decide:

* What do I now do for my child?
* What does my child want to learn?
* What is my child ready to learn?
* What do I want my child to learn?
* Are there skills that my child can do in some situations but not in others?

____

2. BREAK IT DOWN
How can this skill be broken down into easy to learn steps? __________

____

3. CHECK IT OUT

Practice this skill with your child.
Are there steps he/she can do already? ______________________
____
Which steps will you need to teach your child? ________________
____

4. THINK IT THROUGH
Are you and your child ready to work on this skill?

____ Yes	Great! Let's get started! (We will be talking more specifically about how to teach new skills to your child in the next module).
_____ No	Go back to step one and rethink what you would like to teach your child.

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

In a Nutshell

A. Teach your child skills that you would like him/her to do more often or with less assistance or when you would like to replace undesirable behavior with a skill that is more acceptable.

B. Ask yourself the following questions to help you decide what to teach your child:

1. What skills do I do for my child?
2. What does my child want to learn?
3. What is my child ready to learn?
4. What do I want my child to learn?
5. Are there skills that my child can do in some situations but not in others?

C. Once you have decided what to teach your child, break the skill down into easy to learn steps. This is called task analysis.

D. Break it down. To break a skill down, you can:

1. List the steps from memory.
2. Watch someone else do the skill and list the steps, or
3. Do the skill yourself and list the steps as you go along.

E. Check it out. When you have the steps listed, check how well your child can do each of the steps. Practice the skill with your child giving gradually more help until you get a good idea of which steps your child can do and how much help he/she needs.

F. Think it through. Decide on whether the steps you now have listed is a reasonable place to start. If there are many difficult steps in this list, you may need to break one or two of these steps down further and teach that step before you go on to the whole skill. As you are thinking it through, you may also decide that your child does better with the skill then you thought he'd be able to and your time would be better spent teaching him a different skill.

LEAP PRESCHOOL

STAFF SKILL TRAINING PROGRAM

MODULE #8: Hierarchy of Prompts

Main Ideas

- Types of Assistance
- Using Assistance to Teach New Skills
- Choosing Easy Materials and Settings
- Getting a Child Interested in Learning a New Skill

INTRODUCTION

In the last session, we talked about how to decide what to teach your child and how to break complex skills down into easy to learn steps. Today we will be looking more specifically at how to teach a new skill. In the last module, we talked about the importance of breaking a complicated skill down into simpler steps. A list of these steps is called a task analysis. The next step is to check out what the child is already able to do and which steps you will need to teach. Finally, we talked about the need to think through the list of steps you come up with and decide if it is a good place to start or if you need to break one or two of these steps down further.

Chaining

Now that you have an idea of the steps that you would like to teach your child, what is the next step? Where should you start? It may be difficult to teach all of the steps at once. It is a good idea at this point to decide which order you would like to teach these steps. *(Pass out the Activity Sheet.)* In the first part of this Activity Sheet is a list of the steps a family may use to teach the skill of putting on pants. Which step do you think would be the easiest step to teach your child? Which step would you teach next? Which step do you think would be most difficult for your child to learn? *(Allow time for the group* *to complete this section of the Activity Sheet.)*

One way to plan where to start teaching is to begin with the step that would be the easiest to teach a child. This will help both you and the child feel like you accomplish something quickly. When a child is doing this step very well, you can begin with another step. The most difficult steps would be taught last. Teaching a skill step by step in this manner is called chaining. Chaining is the process of reinforcing a child for learning more and more steps of a task analysis. So, when a child has learned the easiest step in the task analysis, you will begin to require a little more. You will continue to add steps in this way until the child is able to complete all of the steps in the task analysis.

Sometimes when you begin to teach this way, the steps naturally build on each other and you will begin to teach step one then continue sequentially through the list. You may find at other times that the easiest step is the last step. In this case you could do all of the steps for the child, then let him finish up by doing the last step by himself. Finishing all by himself will give your child a sense of accomplishment. When he does the last step very well you can begin to have him do the last two steps by himself. This is another type of chaining called backward chaining. To illustrate backward chaining, think about the skill of cleaning up toys. If you ask a child to clean up after center time when then floor may be scattered with many toys, the child may feel overwhelmed, refuse or be unable to complete the task. However, if you clean up most of the items before giving the direction to clean up, then ask the child to finish the task, you may find that she is much more successful.

Assistance

Young children sometimes need help to learn a new skill. As they learn the skill, they begin to need less and less help. The many ways that we give children help when they are learning is called assistance. Assistance is help given to a child at the same time you give her a direction or ask a question. Giving a child assistance helps her learn a new skill without becoming too frustrated. It will also prevent a child from learning the wrong way to do the skill or task. Holding a child's shirt to help her put it on is an example of assistance. Another example is giving a child a hint like "Pick up the big block...it's red".

We're going to talk about five types of assistance that you can use to teach a child a new skill. *Write "Types of Assistance" on the board.* The first type is called modeling. Modeling means that you show the child what to do. Has anyone ever tried to learn to knit or sew? If you were going to learn to knit from your mother or aunt, would you want her to tell you how to do it over the telephone? It may be quite frustrating to try to learn in that way. Wouldn't it be right to have her right there to show you what to do at each step of the way. This is modeling.

Many skills can be taught to children by modeling the skill and having them watch you. Children often learn to jump, clap their hands, or use sign language by watching something else. You can also have a child watch other children in the classroom model how to do something. (*Pass out the Example Sheet.*) Listen to example number one:

Shawna wanted to teach her three-year-old daughter to scribble or draw. She had tried many times to put the chalk or crayon in Sherri's hand and physically guide her hand to draw. Sherri didn't seem interested and rarely chose to draw when she was playing. One day, when the neighborhood children were playing outside, Shawna and Sherri watched the children drawing with chalk on the sidewalk. Shawna placed some chalk in Sherri's hand and told her to do what the other kids were doing. Sherri enjoyed watching and imitating the other kids.

Can anyone think of an example of how you have used modeling to teach your child a new skill? *(Allow time for answers.)*

Another type of assistance you can use with a child is a visual cue. *(List "2. Visual Cue" under the heading on the board.)* A visual cue is anything that you show a child so that she better understands what you want her to do. The most common type of visual cue we use with children is gesturing. An example of gesturing would be to tell a child to sit down while you are pointing to the chair. Indicating "big" with widespread arms when teaching big and little is another example of using gestures. Another way to use visual cues is to draw dots that children can trace to draw shapes or letters. Sometimes teachers use pictures to teach children the different areas in the classroom or where their cubbies or lockers are located. Can anyone think of an example of how you have used a visual cue to teach your child a new skill? Allow time for answers.

A verbal cue is another type of assistance that you can give children to teach new skills. *(List "3. Verbal Cue." under the heading on the board.)* One type of verbal cue is any 'hint' that you may give a child to help him learn a new skill. For example, if you wanted to teach a child the names of different colors, you might point to the color red and say "What color is this? Say re..." Another way to use a verbal cue as a hint is to exaggerate or emphasize an important word. For example, you might say to a child, "Point to the RED balloon" while exaggerating the word red. For example, you could comment "This is a red car" then ask "What color is this?" Can anyone think of a way that you have used verbal cues to teach your child a skill? (*Allow time for answers.*)

The next type of assistance we'll be talking about is physical assistance. *(List "4. Physical assistance" under the heading on the board.)* Physical assistance means helping a child by physically guiding him with your hands or body. There are many different levels of physical assistance you can use with a child. Sometimes you will need to use full physical assistance by placing your hands over the child's to guide him through the skill. One example of this would be to place your hands over a child's hands to help him pull up his pants. Full physical assistance is the most assistance you can give a child. It is used when a child is not familiar with doing the skill you are teaching him. Full physical assistance helps him practice the movements required to do a skill.

There are some skills that a child may be somewhat familiar with which you may begin teaching with partial instead of full physical assistance. This partial physical assistance helps to make sure the child does not fail at a new skill. For example, if you began to teach a child to eat with a fork by using full physical assistance, the next step may be to give less help. It is important to gradually fade how much help you are giving a child rather than withdrawing the assistance all at once. So, you can use less assistance, but still help by placing your hand on the child's arm or wrist and very lightly guiding her through the skill. In other words, your hand is there to help when necessary, but the child is beginning to do the skill on her own.

Another common example of how we use physical assistance is when teaching a child to ride a bike. At first, balancing the bike is for a child so the adult gives full assistance for balancing while the child is getting used to pedaling and steering. As the child's balance skills improve, the adult uses partial physical assistance to balance the bike only when needed. This partial physical assistance may start as having both hands on the bike and gradually fade to the point where the adult is running behind the child, ready to catch him and help balance if necessary. Can anyone think of an example of how you have used Physical assistance to teach your child a new skill? *(Allow time for answers.)*

To summarize, the types of assistance are:

1) Modeling (showing the child what to do)
2) Visual cues (showing the child something that helps him understand what to do)
3) Verbal cues (telling the child something that helps him understand what to do)
4) Physical assistance (using your hands or body to help the child do the skill)

Using Assistance

When you have decided to teach a child a new skill, think about how to help the child learn the skill. If the child is unable to do the skill now, you will need to plan to use some type of assistance. For example, if a child has never cleaned up before and you would like him to learn this skill, simply saying "David, clean up now" may not be enough to teach him. You could physically guide him, model for him, make sure containers for toys are nearby, or give verbal directions for each toy. Choosing a type of assistance will be based on what you are teaching, how much of the skill the child can already do, and what type of assistance you and the child are most comfortable with. Here are a few other guidelines to remember about using assistance: *(These guidelines are also listed in the "In a Nutshell" handout that you will be getting at the end).*

1. Assistance can be used for the first step of a skill or for each step. For example, if you are teaching a child to put several toys away, you might model putting one toy away as you give the child the direction "Put the toys away". After you have modeled once, you may be able to just give the verbal direction or to use the visual cue of pointing to each toy.

2. If you are teaching a task that involves a series of different steps, such as putting beads on a string. For example, you may be able to point to the bead as you tell the child to pick it up, but you may need to use full physical assistance to help the child put the beads on the string.

3. Use only the amount of assistance that is needed. The amount of assistance that you use should be enough to allow a child to successfully complete the task without frustration, but not so much that there is not learning or challenge involved.

4. Gradually fade your assistance as your child begins to learn the skills. In other words, gradually reduce the amount of assistance or the type of assistance that you give the child as she learns to do the skill. Slowly fading your assistance will ensure that the child continues to do the skill correctly, but will encourage the child to be more independent.

5. Sometimes you will have to use extra assistance if the child does not respond, incorrectly responds, or attempts but is unable to correctly respond to your direction. This extra assistance is sometimes called a **correction procedure**. For example, you may ask a child to take a bite of food as you point to his plate (a visual cue). If a child does not take a bite within several seconds, you might decide to physically guide his hand to take a bite. The physical assistance, in this example, is used to help the child learn the correct response. When you use extra assistance, the end result should be that the child responds correctly. Make sure that you give the child plenty of time to respond before you give the extra assistance. And, make the additional assistance positive by emphasizing the correct response. In other words, instead of saying "No that's not where you put the fork" you can say "That fork goes over here."

Choosing Easy Materials or Settings

Sometimes the simplest way to teach a new skill is to choose easy materials or settings. One example of this would be to allow a child to practice catching ball, using a large ball which would be easier than using a small tennis ball. A child may learn a new skill in a quiet area, rather than in a noisy, distracting setting. Catching from two feet away would be easier than catching a ball thrown from 10 feet away. And, it would be easier for a child to "find the red crayon" from choice of two rather than from a whole box of crayons. Here's another example:

> *Four year old Carly was always on the move. She would begin to play with a toy, but within one minute would lose interest and move on to something else. Her mother, Natalie, has been trying to teach her to keep her attention on one toy or activity for longer periods of time. Natalie has decided that to begin to teach this, she is going to need to really structure the situation. Each night, right after dinner, Natalie has Carly sit at a table. Natalie stands right behind her so Carly can't scoot her chair away. Natalie sets up Carly's favorite puzzle with only three pieces not finished. Natalie verbally prompts Carly to finish the last three pieces and put the puzzle away. Although this only takes a Carly about a minute, Natalie plans to gradually increase the number of pieces, length of time, and types of toys Carly will play with at this time. Once Carly is able to play for longer periods of time in this structured activity, Natalie will set up the puzzle and other toys at less structured times.*

Sometimes it is necessary to teach a child a new skill in a more structured, less distracting situation. Setting up this very structured play time for Carly is an example of this. Of course, when a child is able to use the easier materials or setting to do the new skill, you can gradually make it more natural, and less structured. Can anyone think of a skill that you taught your child by choosing easy materials or settings? Allow time for answers. Here are a few of the ways you can choose easier materials:

1. Use materials that are easier (larger, stretchier, simpler)
2. Give fewer choices when asking a child to discriminate between

materials (two crayons instead of a whole box)
3. Position the child and yourself to make the skill easier (get closer when teaching the child to catch)
4. Make sure the setting isn't too distracting (go to quiet area, etc)

Think About When to Teach

The time of day that you choose to teach a skill to a child is another thing to think about. Whenever possible, teach skills when it is natural for them to happen. Teaching a child to zip his coat when he doesn't really need a coat on may be confusing and uncomfortable for the child. It also may give you a false sense of whether or not the child can really do the skill. A child may easily answer yes/no questions in a one-to-one teaching situation, but not be able to when you ask him if he wants spaghetti for dinner or if he played on the slide at school today. It may be better to teach the skill of answering yes/no questions throughout the day whenever it is needed.

Sometimes it is too difficult to teach a skill in the natural environment. As mentioned earlier, you may need to teach the skill in a less distracting situation or when you are not as busy. For example, although the best time for a child to learn to dress himself would be when he needs to get dressed for school in the morning, this can often be a very rushed and confusing time for your family. Another time that is natural for dressing to happen would be at bedtime. This may be an easier time to teach this skill. The second thing to think about is the time of day. Think about this example:

> *Kenneth wanted to teach his son, Joel, to turn pages in a book. He decode he would use his son's favorite book and that Joel would have to turn the page for his father to keep reading. He began to teach this at bedtime. Every night, Joel would end up crying and whining through the whole book.*

Why do you think it was difficult for Joel to learn this skill at bedtime? Children are often very tired at the end of the day. Teaching skills at this time can be very difficult. It is best to teach skills when your child is not tired. Sometimes it is difficult to work these suggestions into your plans for teaching your child. How can you teach dressing skills in the morning before school when you just don't have time? Or how can you spend the time teaching your child to play with toys independently at meal preparation time when you are busy watching two other children and preparing dinner?

Getting a Child Interested in Learning a Skill

Another thing to consider when deciding when to teach children certain skills is to use motivating materials or activities. One way to do this is to use a child's favorite activity, toy, or character to get him interested in the new skill. If a child loves to do puzzles and you want to teach him to name shapes, you might get him a puzzle with shapes in it. It may be easier to teach a child who loves to jump to jump onto pictures, colors, or shapes rather than pointing to them. Books about other children learning or doing the skill may also increase a child's interest. Many parents use children's books and videos about potty training to get children interested in learning to use the toilet.

Sometimes just setting up materials in an interesting way will get a child interested. Setting paints, paper and water out on a table may make it more likely that a child will be interested in art than if these materials are put away in a box on a shelf. If a child saw Mr. Potato Head and all of the parts out on a table it would be more likely that he would initiate putting the parts together than if all of the parts were put away out of sight. It will be easier for a child to choose what to play with and keep himself busy when toys are put away neatly on shelves or in bins then when they are all thrown into a large box. When a child is unable to choose or plan what to play with, you may need to remind her of what is available by setting the toys out or organizing them neatly.

Because a child will learn a skill best if you teach when he is interested and initiates trying a skill, there are some ways to set up this interest to give you more opportunities to teach in a natural setting. If you provide a child with plenty of opportunities to observe others doing the skill, the child may try to imitate it. A child may also learn to play appropriately with certain toys by watching other children in the classroom. If you would like a child to say "Thank you" when he is given something, he may learn to do this faster if he hears others doing it more frequently.

Doing these three things; using motivating materials, setting up materials in an interesting way, and providing a child with opportunities to observe others, will make it more likely that a child will initiate in learning the skill. Now you'll be able to, when possible, wait until a child is interested in the materials or in doing the skill. Here in an example:

> *Marilyn decided to teach her daughter Maura to ask other children to play with her. One day Maura was playing with her favorite music box. Marilyn said, "Maura, ask Jacob to play with you." Maura began to cry because she didn't want Jacob to play with her music box. Later that day, Maura was playing on the swing set outside. When she began to get on the seesaw, Marilyn again said "Maura, ask Jacob to play with you." Maura did ask Jacob and the two children had fun playing together on the seesaw.*

Does anyone have an idea of why Maura responded differently in these two situations? (*Give time for answers.*) The music box is difficult to share because it can be a one person toy and because it seems to be Maura's favorite "special" toy. Maura is probably less interested in other children playing with her when she is playing with this type of a toy. There are many games or toys, like the seesaw, that actually require another child to make it easier for Maura to learn this skill. If you have a child's interest in the activity or materials you are going to use to teach a skill, a child may learn the skill more effectively. So, it may be more effective to have Maura ask another child to play when she is interested in a ball or a board game.

Does anyone know of other ways to get children interested in learning certain skills? *(Allow time for answers.)*

Bringing it Home

Pass out the "Bringing it Home" handout for this session. Go over the directions and discuss responses of those parents that wish to share the information.

Summary

Summarize the session by reviewing the following:

A) Begin by teaching a child the easiest step. When she is doing that step very well, begin to teach the next step. This is called chaining.

B) When you give a child some type of help at the same time you give her a direction or ask a question you are using assistance.

C) The types of assistance we discussed were:
1. Modeling - show the child what to do
2. Visual Cues - showing the child something that helps her understand what to do
3. Verbal Cues - telling the child something that helps him understand what to do
4. Physical Assistance - using your hands or body to help the child do the skill

D) Sometimes the simplest way to teach a new skill is to choose easy materials or settings.

E) Teach skills when it is natural for them to happen and when the child is not tired.

F) Get the child interested in learning a skill by having her observe others doing the skill, using motivating materials, or setting up materials in an interesting way.

In a Nutshell

Refer parents to the "In a Nutshell" handout. Suggest to parents that they read over the handout as an additional review and that they share the information with family members, other care givers and interested friends.

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

Activity Sheet

I. Here are the steps you could use for reaching the skill of putting on pants:

1. Sit on floor
2. Pull one leg of pants over foot
3. Pull other leg of pants over foot
4. Stand up
5. Pull to hips
6. Pull over hips
7. Zip pants
8. Snap pants

Answer the following questions:

Which step do you think would be the easiest for your child to learn?

____

Which step would you teach next?

____

____

In what order would you teach the rest of the steps?

____

____

____

What type(s) of assistance would you use to teach your child this skill
How would you fade this assistance?

____

____

____

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

Example Sheet

1. Shawna wanted to teach her three year old daughter to scribble or draw. She had tried many times to put the chalk or crayon in Sherri's hand and physically guide her hand to draw when she was playing. Oneday, when the neighborhood children were playing outside. Shawna and Sherri watched the children drawing with chalk on the sidewalk. Shawna placed some chalk in Sherri's hand and told her to do what the other kids were doing. Sherri enjoyed watching and imitating the other kids.

2. Three year old Carly was always on the move. She would begin to play with a toy, but within one minute would lose interest and move on to something else. Her mother, Natalie, has been trying to teach her to keep her attention on one toy or activity for longer periods of time. Natalie has decided that to begin to teach this she is going to need to really structure the situation. Each night, right after dinner, Natalie has Carly sit at a table. Natalie stands right behind her so Carly can't scoot her chair away. Natalie sets up Carly's favorite puzzle with only three pieces not finished. Natalie verbally prompts Carly to finish the last three pieces and put the puzzle away. Although this only takes Carly about a minute, Natalie plans to gradually increase the number of pieces, length of time and types of toys Carly will play with at this time. Once Carly is able to play for longer periods of time in this structured activity, Natalie will set up the puzzle and other toys at less structured times.

3. Kenneth wanted to teach his son, Joel, to turn pages in a book. He decided he would use his son's favorite book and that Joel would have to turn the page for his father to keep reading. He began to teach this at bedtime. Every night, Joel would end up crying and whining through the whole book.

4. Marilyn decided to teach her daughter, Maura, to ask other children to play with her. One day, Maura was playing with her favorite music box. Marilyn said, "Maura, ask Jacob to play with you." Maura began to cry because she didn't want Jacob to play with her music box. Later that day, Maura was playing on the swing set. When she began to get on the seesaw, Marilyn again said, "Maura, ask Jacob to play with you." Maura did ask Jacob and the two children had fun playing together on the seesaw.

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

Bringing it Home

Fill in the following information:

A skill that I would like to teach my child is ______________________________
____

Here's how I could break this skill down into easy to learn steps:

____
____
____
____
____

The easiest step for this child to learn would be:

____
____

I will teach the rest of the steps in this order:

____
____
____
____
____
____

I would use the following type(s) of assistance:

Here's how I will fade the assistance:

Here are other strategies we discussed:
-choose easy materials or settings
-teach skills when it is natural for them to happen
-provide opportunities for the child to observe others doing the skill
-use motivating materials
-set up materials in an interesting way

Here are some ways I may use these strategies to teach this skill:

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

In a Nutshell

A. Begin by teaching the child the easiest step. When he is doing that step very well, begin to teach the next step. This is called chaining.

B. When you give a child some type of help at the same time you give her a direction or ask a question you are using assistance.

C. The types of assistance we discussed were:

1. Modeling - showing the child what to do
2. Visual Cues - showing the child something that helps her understand what to do
3. Verbal Cues - telling the child something that helps him understand what to do
4. Physical Assistance - Using your hands or body to help the child do the skill

D. Choosing a type of assistance will be based on what you are teaching, how much of the skill the child can already do, and what type of assistance you and the child are most comfortable with.

E. Here are some other guidelines for using assistance:

1. Assistance can be used for the first step of a skill or for each step. For example, if you are teaching a child to put several toys away, you might model putting one toy away as you give the child the direction "Put the toys away". After you have modeled once, you may be able to just give the verbal direction or to use the visual cue of pointing to each toy.

2. If you are teaching a task that involves a series of different steps, such as putting on shoes, you may need to use several different types of assistance throughout. For example, you may be able to point to the shoe as you tell the child to pick up his shoe, but you may need to use full physical assistance to help the child brush his teeth.

3. Use only the amount of assistance that is needed. The amount of assistance that you use should be enough to allow the child to successfully complete the task without frustration, but not so much that there is no learning or challenge involved.

4. Gradually fade your assistance as the child begins to learn the skills.

In other words, gradually reduce the amount of assistance or the type of assistance that you give the child as she learns to do the skill. Slowly fading your assistance will ensure that the child continues to do the skill correctly, but will encourage the child to do more and more independently.

5. Sometimes you will have to use more assistance if the child does not respond, incorrectly responds, or attempts but is unable to correctly respond to your direction. Here are some things to consider when giving more assistance:

   a. Give the child plenty of time to respond before you give more assistance. You want the child to try what you've asked and have a chance to do it with the least amount of assistance. But, at the same time, you don't want the child to get frustrated or practice a wrong response. Five to ten seconds is usually a good amount of time to wait before giving more assistance.

   b. Emphasize the correct response. Rather than saying "no, that's not right" tell the child what the right response is. Emphasizing the correct response is much more positive.

F. Sometimes the simplest way to teach a new skill is to choose easy materials or settings. Here are some things to consider:

1. Use materials that are easier - a larger ball to teach catching, a stretchier jacket to teach dressing, or a game with fewer steps to teach turn taking.
2. Give fewer choices when asking the child to discriminate between materials - show two crayons instead of a whole box when asking the child to "find the red crayon".
3. Position yourself and the child to make the skill easier - get closer when teaching the child to catch - stay close to the child to encourage them to complete an activity.
4. Make sure the setting isn't too distracting - perhaps try a quiet area of the room.

G. Teach skills when it is natural for them to happen and when the child is not tired.

H. Get the child interested in learning a skill by:
1. having her observe others doing the skill
2. using motivating materials, or
3. setting up materials in an interesting way.

LEAP PRESCHOOL

STAFF SKILL TRAINING PROGRAM

MODULE #9: Encouraging Children to Communicate

Main Ideas

- Recognition of Different Means of Communication
- Identify the Different Types of Communication
- Identify Strategies for Encouraging Communication
- Environmental Strategies to Encourage Communication
- Incidental Teaching

Introduction

Many preschool children in early intervention have needs in the area of language and communication. They need to learn to communicate with their family, friends, and teachers. Some children have goals that they will learn to say words or use words in sentences while others may be working on developing different types of communication such as using sign language or pictures. Some children may even need to work on the most basic level of showing an interest in communicating. In each of these situations, communication skills are best learned in natural everyday situations rather than in formalized, one to one or group instruction.

Families are in an ideal situation to encourage young children to communicate. Because parents and siblings are the people that are with young children the most, they have the most opportunities to teach language skills. Also, young children will often respond best to the people with whom they are most familiar. Families are well equipped to teach young children to communicate and they do this in very natural ways without thinking about it. Your child needs to learn to communicate about the objects, people, and situations that are within your home and your family's routine.

How Your Child Communicates:

When we talk about communication, it is important to realize that there are many ways to communicate. *(Pass out the Example Sheet. Refer parents to Examples in Part I.*) Read through all of the examples in Part 1. *(Allow time to read.)*

1. *Alexa cries. Her mother gives her Cheerios.*
2. *Darnell reaches toward a jar of peanut butter on a high shelf. His dad makes him a sandwich.*
3. *Courtney gives her brother a picture of an apple. Her brother gives her an apple.*
4. *Jesse says, "I'm really hungry, could I please have a cookie?" Her grandma gives her a cookie.*

What one message were all these children communicating? *(Allow time for answers. Possible response: "I'm hungry" or "Can I have something to eat?" All of the children were asking for something to eat, but each child used a different way to communicate.)*

(Write heading "How a Child Communicates" on board. Number 1-9 under it.) In what ways did children communicate? (*As parents answer, list on board under corresponding number.)*

How a Child Communicates:

1. *Whines/cries*
2. *Reaches toward object*
3.
4.
5.
6. *Shows picture of object*
7. *Vocalizes*
8.

Each of their caregivers understand and responded appropriately to the message, even though only one of the children used words to get his message across. It is important to encourage communication, whether verbal or nonverbal. Think about how your child currently communicates and encourages continued and increased communication right at or slightly above that level.

Let's fill in the other ways a child communicates on our list. Number three is points to object. *(List on the board.)* Can anyone think of an example on this type of communication? *(Allow time for answers. Possible response: points to certain book to indicate that she wants to read it.)*

Number four is gives the object to someone. List on board. Can anyone think of an example of this type of communication? *Possible response: gives bag of pretzels to indicate that he wants it opened.*

Number five is uses gestures or sign language. *(List on board.)* Can anyone think of an example of this type of communication? (*Possible responses: Waves hand to indicate "Come here" or opens and closes hand to indicate "I want that."*)

Number seven is vocalizes. *(List on board.)* This may be vocalizing part of a word or making a sound that is not a real word. Can anyone think of an example of what this type of communication means? *(Allow time for answers -Possible response: "Uh" for up or "mmm" for hungry.)*

Number eight is uses one word. *(List on board.)* Can anyone think of an example of using one word to communicate. *(Allow time for answers. Possible response: saying "cookie" to ask for a cookie.)*

(Summarize the information that is now on the board.)

How A Child Communicates:

1. *Whines or cries*
2. *Reaches toward object*
3. *Points to object*
4. *Gives the object*
5. *Uses gestures or sign language*
6. *Shows a picture of the object*
7. *Vocalizes*
8. *Uses one word*
9. *Uses phrase or sentence*

This list of ways a child communicates gets gradually more complex. Children often use different means of communication in different situations or even with different people. A child may be very talkative at home, but may use pointing or whining to communicate in an unfamiliar, crowded or noisy situation.

Children also often combine different communicative means in a single message. For example, a child may cry, reach for the door and vocalize when she wants to go outside.

Why Your Child Communicates

Just as there are different ways for a child to get a message across, there are many reasons that children communicate each day. So far, we have mainly been talking about the first reason your child communicates which is to **request**. *(Write why your child communicates as a heading on the board. List "1. To_request" under the heading.)* To request means to ask another person for something. Children use requesting to ask for things that they need or want. Food, toys, attention, comfort, particular people, activities or motivating objects may be requested by using any of the ways to communicate we have already talked about.

Children also communicate to **protest**. *(List "2. To protest" under the heading on the board.)* When a child indicates that he doesn't like or doesn't want something, this is a protest. A child may also push something away, say or sign "no" or show a picture of the word "no".

Children also protest in undesirable ways. Yelling "no", throwing something, screaming, or hitting someone are some undesirable ways children protest. These undesirable behaviors will often decrease when a child is taught appropriate ways to protest.

Another reason children communicate is to **comment**. (*List "3. To comment" under the heading on the board.)* To comment means to tell about something you see or something you are doing. A child's comment may be one or two words such as "Look birdie" or "big truck". Or the comment can be more complex such as, "I'm putting the little boy in the dollhouse". Some examples of non-verbal types of commenting are a child pointing to an airplane in the sky, a child signing "big" when a big truck goes by, or a child showing his dad the painting he made.

The next reason a child communicates we'll talk about is to **answer questions**. *(List "4. To answer questions" under the heading on the board.)* Someone asks the child a question and the child responds in some way. Look at the following examples in Part II of the Example Sheet:

> *His mom asks Troy, "What do you want for breakfast?" Troy goes to the cupboard and gets out the Rice Krispies.*
>
> *Her brother asks Angela, "Do you want to watch Winnie the Pooh?" Angela nods her head "yes."*
>
> *Davey asks Kara "What did you do at school today?" Kara say "Play cars."*

There are many types of questions that you can ask a child. Some of the types of questions include:

> *Making a choice* - *"Do you want the red shirt or the blue shirt?"*
> *Affirming or denying* *(yes/no) - "Did you break this toy?" or "Do you like juice?"*
> *Asking about past events* - *"What did you do today?"*
> *Asking about concepts* - *"What color is this?"*

A child may also **ask questions** to communicate. The child may ask someone for information. "Where's Daddy?", "What are we doing today?" and "Why do birds sing?" are some verbal examples of asking questions. Non-verbally a child may point to something as if to say "What's that?" or bring you a picture of her grandma as if to say "Where's Grandma?"

We often begin to teach a child to talk by asking him to label objects (in other words to answer the question "What is this?"). Although this is a nice skill for children to have, we must not stop there. Labeling objects is a very concrete skill which some children can learn very quickly. It may seem that the child is progressing rapidly in communication when he is able to name a lot of objects. We must remember that this is only one type of communication. When a child is asked too many questions, there is less opportunity for him to initiate the conversation. Because he is being asked questions, most of his communication is for one reason, to answer questions. We want children to realize that they can communicate for many reasons as shown here on the board. *(Review information on the board.)*

Why your child communicates:

1. *To request*
2. *To protest*
3. *To comment*
4. *To answer questions*
5. *To ask questions*

When and Where Your Child Communicates

When is the best time of the day to teach communication? When does your child want or need to communicate? The answer to these two questions is the same. The best time to teach communication to a child is when the child wants or needs to communicate. This might be at 6:00 AM, at 12 noon, or at 8:00 in the evening. Your child may need to request comfort in the middle of the night, or tell you about her playdoh sculpture while you are making dinner at 5:30 PM. These are teaching opportunities.

The answer to "where can you teach communication?" is similar. Teach communication where your child needs or wants to communicate. In the living room, dining room, kitchen, bedroom or bathroom; at home, at the park, at church, in the car or at the store; these are the places where you can teach your child to communicate.

Now we can answer how, why, when and where a child communicates. Look at the Activity Sheet. Read the first part and we'll go over the answers together:

> *On Saturday afternoon, Kristin and her dad, Brian, went shopping at the mall. Kristin loves to go up and down escalators. Brian began walking past the escalators. Kristin pointed toward the escalator.*

(Go over the questions on the Activity Sheet together for this example:)

When did Kristin communicate? *Possible response: When she saw the escalator.*

Where did Kristin communicate? *Possible response: At the mall.*

Why did Kristin communicate? *Possible response:To request to go up the escalator.*

How did Kristin communicate? *Possible response: Pointed toward the escalator.*

Take a few minutes to complete the other two examples on the Activity Sheet. Refer to the information on the board to answer the why and how questions. (*Give time to complete and go over responses with parents who would like to discuss their answers.)*

Responsive Strategies for Encouraging Communication

1) WATCH
2) WAIT
3) FOLLOW YOUR CHILD'S LEAD

The methods for encouraging communication that we will be talking about will all be most effective if you remember these three steps: 1. **WATCH** - watch to see what your child is interested in and watch for signs that your child is communicating with you. 2. **WAIT** - don't talk or ask questions for a few moments to give your child a chance to initiate communication (at least 5 seconds). 3. **FOLLOW YOUR CHILD'S LEAD** - talk about and play with the materials that your child is interested in.

It often seems that the most difficult of these steps is WAIT. It is so natural to want to fill in the silence with talking or asking questions. But be careful. Allow your child plenty of time to initiate conversation and respond to your conversation.

Mirroring

If your child vocalizes or does something with a toy or object while you are WATCHing and WAITing, you can **mirror** what he/she says or does. This is the first strategy for encouraging communication that we will be discussing. **Mirroring means to imitate what your child says or does**. This is very effective with children that are not yet saying words. It shows your child that his/her vocalizations and play behaviors are important to you and gives him/her a chance to participate in a "conversation". If your child squeals with delight, you squeal. If she pushes a car, you push a car and if she claps her hands, you clap your hands. If she says "ba ba ba" you say "ba ba ba". Once you get into a mirroring activity with your child, you can alter it slightly to see if the child will imitate you. This can work particularly well with a mirroring activity that involves vocalizations or verbalizations.

Turn Taking

Mirroring is one example of the next strategy - **turn taking**. **Turn taking means developing a pattern of conversation or behaviors in which you and the child alternate saying or doing things.** The best examples of turn taking have both partners, you and your child, involved with the same materials or talking about the same topic. Although this may be difficult at first, the turn taking partners should be paying attention to each other. Taking turns can be done with verbalizations or vocalizations or by physical actions. It is important to share control of the turn taking by letting your child decide what to do or talk about as often as you do.

Reflecting

If your child is just beginning to use words or combine words, the strategy of **reflecting** may be helpful. **Reflecting means encouraging your child's attempts to communicate by repeating them back to him.** If your child uses incorrect pronunciations, you can model the correct way to say it without calling attention to the error. Here's an example: Krystal pushes a car and says "tar doe". Her mom says "Yes, the car goes." Notice that her mother did not say "no, don't say tar say car", but simply repeated it back, using the appropriate pronunciation.

Children that are learning to use pictures or sign language to communicate also can benefit from the strategy of reflecting. When your child gives you the picture of a ball to ask for a ball, you can say "Oh you want the ball."

Expansion

If you add more words to your child's message, you are using the next strategy, **expansion**. A child can learn new concepts or more elaborate sentence structure when her message is expanded. When you add more words to what your child says, try to increase the language level only slightly. Look at the examples in Part III of the Example Sheet:

Gretchen: "Shirt on."
Mom: "Blue shirt on."

Malcolm: "Baby eat."
Dad: "The baby eats cereal."

Zach: "Fall down."
Grandpa: "Oh, you fell down and hurt your knee."

Self Talk

The next strategy we'll talk about is **self talk.** Self talk which means talking about what you are doing, thinking, or feeling. Use self talk that is at or slightly more advanced than your child's current language level. If your child is not talking, use 1 or 2 word descriptions such as "Book," "Big ball," or "Mommy's eating." If your child uses 1 or 2 word phrases you can use 3 or 4 word phrases such as "Daddy's making dinner" "It is hot today" or "I'm drawing a cat."

Parallel Talk

Parallel talk is similar to self talk except you describe what your child is doing, seeing, or feeling. Again, the descriptions you use should be at or slightly above your child's current language level. If your child is playing with blocks, you might say "Block on" or "Oops" the blocks fell down". If he is playing with dinosaurs, you could say "The big dinosaur is fighting with the little dinosaur." This strategy of parallel talk is also helpful when your child is not yet able to express feelings of sadness, frustration, or anger. "I know you fell sad when we can't find your blanket" or "You are angry. Jason took your doll."

Let's take a moment to remind ourselves of the first three rules we talked about: Watch, Wait, and Follow your child's lead. Commenting about what you and your child are doing are great strategies for language enrichment. However, just as with questions, you must use it sparingly with long pauses between statements to give your child plenty of time to respond or initiate conversation.

Environmental Strategies to Encourage Communication

There is another group of strategies for increasing opportunities for communication that are called **environmental strategies**. **Environmental strategies involve arranging something about the setting or materials you and your child are using to make it more likely that your child will need or want to communicate.** These environmental strategies are used during situations that are part of an established routine and work best when your child understands that routines have predictable sequence of events. When your child is highly motivated by the materials and routines that are being arranged, he will be more likely to communicate with you.

Forgetfulness

The first environmental strategy we'll look at is called **forgetfulness**. This is where you purposefully "forget" to provide everything that is needed for an activity. Your child will then need to use some type of communication to let you know that you forgot. Look at the example in Part IV of the Example Sheet.

> *Kirk wanted to paint. He gave his mom a picture of paint to let her know. His mom, Grace, set up an easel with paper and three jars of paint. She did not give Kirk any paintbrushes. Grace told Kirk, "Go ahead, you can paint now", and went into the kitchen. Kirk looked around for the brushes, then went into the kitchen to get his mom. He pulled on her hand. Grace gave him an expectant look as if she didn't understand what he needed. Finally, Kirk found the picture of paintbrushes and give it his mom. Grace said "Oh you need paintbrushes" and gave them to Kirk.*

Other examples include giving your child applesauce with no spoon or putting her in the bathtub with no water. For some children, you may need to be close by and/or holding the necessary material.

Visible but Unreachable

Another environmental strategy is called **visible but unreachable**. For this strategy you can place an object that your child needs or wants is out of his reach, but is still within sight. Desired objects can be placed on a high shelf or in a locked, see-through cabinet. For example, you can place snacks on top of the refrigerator or put bath toys in a net bag hanging from the shower head. Here again, your child will need to initiate an interaction with you to get the object she wants. A similar strategy is to introduce an interesting toy or object to your child that he needs help with. He will need to ask you for help in some way. For example, show your child a wind up toy that he cannot wind up or tell a child that needs help with his shoes to get them on before going outside. It is common for adults to get into the habit of knowing ahead about what their children need or want and giving it to them before they ask. If we wait before providing for our children's needs and wants, we can use these motivating situations to give children plenty of opportunities to communicate.

Violate Expectations/Sabotage

Another way to encourage your child to initiate communication is to **violate his expectations**. In other words, do something silly. Try to put a doll's shoe on your child's foot, or put a sock on his hand. Some other examples would be to give your child a plastic banana for a snack or try to draw with a marker without taking the lid off. Your child might try to protest or try to fix the situation and you can encourage this type of communication. **Sabotage** is a similar strategy. Sabotage is used by deliberately interfering with an activity. For example, you might hide the peanut butter, then ask your child to get it off of the shelf. Or, you might give your child a toy car that has a broken wheel. This strategy encourages your child to try to solve the problem or ask you for your help.

Piece by Piece

The next type of environmental arrangement is called **piece by piece**. This works well with toys that have many pieces like lego blocks or puzzles or with small snack foods such as small pretzels or raisins. You can encourage your child to ask for each piece as you hold it back from him or give just a small amount of snack so your child needs to "ask" for more. You may initiate a "piece by piece" routine by giving the child a couple of pieces with no demands. Then, on the third or fourth piece, hold it back to wait for communication. In summary, the type of environmental strategies to encourage communication we have discusses are:

1. Forgetfulness
2. Visible but unreachable
3. Violate expectations
4. Sabotage
5. Piece by piece

Incidental Teaching

Once you arrange the environment to encourage communication, you have set up a teaching opportunity. Now to make the most of this opportunity, let's look at some strategies you can use to prompt the type of communication you want from your child.

First, think about the environmental arrangement strategies we have discussed. They all involve setting up a situation where your child needs or wants to tell you or ask you something. She may point to or say something, but you would like the communication to be more sophisticated or complex. Here are the steps you can follow:

1. Set up the environment.
2. Wait 5 seconds with an expectant expression on your face. If your child initiates at an appropriate language level, repeat what she says, expand on it, praise her and/or give her the object.

3. If your child does not initiate, you may ask a question or make an open-ended statement (e.g. "What do you want?" or "Oh you want a...") If your child responds, give the object while repeating, expanding, and/or praising.

4. Step 2 can be repeated **one** time. You may ask the same question or change to a simpler one.

5. If your child does not respond, tell her what to say (e.g. "Say cookie please"). If your child responds correctly, give the object while repeating, expanding, and/or praising.

6. If your child does not respond, state the desired response and if appropriate, give the desired object. (At this point, if your child uses sign language or pictures to communicate, you can physically prompt the correct response).

Let's go through two examples. These are on your Example Sheet in Part V.

1. *Maggie placed her daughter Kim's favorite book in a clear plastic bag and closed it tightly with a twist tie. ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY - VISIBLE BUT UNREACHABLE*

   When Kim found the book, she brought it into the living room and gave it to her. REQUEST - GIVES THE OBJECT

   Maggie just looked at Kim with an expectant look on her face and waited 5 seconds -STEP 1.

   When Kim did not respond, Maggie asked "What do you want?" and waited 5 seconds - STEP 2.

   Kim still did not respond so Maggie said "You want me to ____." STEP 3

   Kim did not respond. Maggie said "Say 'read book'". -STEP 4.

   Kim did not respond. Maggie said "Read book" and read the book to Maggie-STEP 5.

2. *Roger gave his son Gabe a bowl of soup with no spoon ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY - FORGETFULNESS*

   Gabe looked at Roger and said "soup" REQUEST - USES ONE WORD

   Roger looked at Gabe expectantly STEP 1

Gabe said "soup"

Roger said "Here's your soup. Do you need something else?" STEP 2

Gabe did not respond.

Roger said "You need a spoon? Say 'spoon'" STEP 4

Gabe said "poon"

Roger said "Oh you need a soup spoon." and gave him one. EXPANSION

Conclusion

Communication includes a variety of skills that are important for young children to learn. For a child's communication to be functional, for her to be able to use it in many environments and with many different people, it must be taught in everyday situations. Responsive, environmental and incidental teaching strategies are the strategies that are designed to be used in these everyday situations.

Bringing it Home

Refer parents to the "Bringing it Home" handout in the Participant's Packet. Go over the directions and discuss responses of those parents that wish to share the information.

Summary

Summarize the session by reviewing the following:

1. How your child communicates:
    a. whines/cries
    b. reaches towards object

   c. points to object
   d. gives the object
   e. uses gestures or sign language
   f. shows a picture of the object
   g. vocalizes
   h. uses one word
   I. uses phrase or sentence

2. Why your child communicates:

   a. to request
   b. to protest
   c. to comment
   d. to answer questions
   e. to ask questions

3. Your child communicates when and where he needs or wants to communicate. This can be early in the morning, in the afternoon or after dinner. It can be at home, at the park, or while you are shopping.

4. The three steps to remember to encourage your child to communicate are:

   a. WATCH
   b. WAIT
   c. FOLLOW YOUR CHILD'S LEAD

5. Some strategies for encouraging communication are:

   a. mirroring
   b. turn-taking
   c. reflecting
   d. expanding
   e. self-talk
   f. parallel talk

6. Environmental strategies for encouraging communication involve arranging the setting or materials you and your child are using to make it more likely that your child will need to or want to communicate. Some of these strategies are:

   a. forgetfulness
   b. visible but unreachable
   c. violate expectations or sabotage
   d. piece by piece

7. Incidental teaching involves setting up the environment then following these steps to prompt the appropriate communication.

   a. set up the environment
   b. wait 5 seconds with an expectant expression on your face
   c. if your child does not respond, ask a question or make an open-ended statement
   d. repeat or rephrase the question or statement
   e. tell your child what to say
   f. say the appropriate response and give the desired object

In a Nutshell

Pass out the "In a Nutshell" handout. Suggest to the parents that they read over the handout as an additional review and that they share the information with family members, other caregivers and interested friends.

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

Example Sheet

PART I

1. Alexa cries. Her mother gives her Cheerios.
2. Darnell reaches toward a jar of peanut butter on a high shelf. His dad makes him a sandwich.
3. Courtney gives her brother a picture of an apple. Her brother gives her an apple.
4. Jesse says, "I'm really hungry, could I please have a cookie?" Her grandma gives her a cookie.

PART II

His mom asks Troy, "What do you want for breakfast?" Troy goes to the cupboard and gets our the Rice Krispies.

Her brother asks Angela. "Do you want to watch Winnie the Pooh?" Angela nods her head "yes."

Davey asks Kara "What color is this block?" Kara says "Blue."

PART III

Gretchen: "Shirt on."
Mom: "Oh, you're putting on your blue shirt."

Malcolm: "Baby eat."
Dad: "The baby is eating is cereal."

Zach: "Fall down."
Grandad: "Oh, you fell down and hurt your knee."

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

Examples (cont.)

PART IV

Kirk wanted to paint. He gave his mom a picture of paint to let her know. His mom, Grace, set up his easel with paper and three jars of paint. She did not give Kirk any paintbrushes. Grace told Kirk, "go ahead, you can paint them now," and went into the kitchen. Kirk looked around for the brushes then went into the kitchen to get his mom. He pulled on her hand. Grace gave him an expectant look as if she don't understand what he needed. Finally, Kirk found the picture of paintbrushes and gave it to his mom. Grace said, "Oh, you need paintbrushes" and gave them to Kirk.

PART V

1. Maggie placed her daughter Kim's favorite book in clear plastic bag and closed it tightly with a twist tie. - ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY - VISIBLE BUT UNREACHABLE.
   When Kim found the book, she brought it into the living room and gave it to her mom. - REQUEST - GIVES THE OBJECT.
   Maggie just looked at Kim with an expectant look on her face. - STEP 1.
   When Kim did not respond, Maggie asked, "What do you want?" -STEP 2.
   Kim still did not respond so Maggie said, "You want me to ____." -STEP 3.
   Kim did not respond. Maggie said, "If you want me to read, say 'read book'." - STEP 4.
   Kim did not respond. Maggie said "Read book" and read the book to Maggie - STEP 5.

2. Roger gave his son Gabe a bowl of soup with no spoon. - ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY - FORGETFULNESS.
   Gabe looked at Roger and said, "soup." - REQUEST - USES ONE WORD.
   Roger looked at Gabe expectantly. - STEP 1.
   Gabe said, "soup."
   Roger said, "Here's your soup. Do you need something else?" - STEP 2.
   Gabe did not respond.
   Roger said, "Do you need a spoon? Say 'spoon.'" - STEP 4
   Gabe said, "poon."
   Roger said, "Oh, you need a soup spoon" and gave him one. - EXPANSION.

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

Activity Sheet

Read each example and answer the questions that follow it.

1. On Saturday afternoon, Kristin and her dad, Brian, went shopping at the mall. Kristin loves to go up and down escalators. Brian began walking past the escalators. Kristin pointed toward the escalator.

When did Kristin communicate?______________________________

Where did Kristin communicate?______________________________

Why did Kristin communicate?______________________________

How did Kristin communicate?______________________________

2. Nicolas and his brother, Aaron, were playing in the backyard after lunch. Nicolas pointed to an airplane in the sky and vocalized, "aaa, aaa." Aaron said, "yes, you see airplane."

When did Nicolas communicate?______________________________

Where did Nicolas communicate?______________________________

Why did Nicolas communicate?______________________________

How did Nicolas communicate (two ways)?________________________

3. Lynda was giving her son, Cody, a bath before bedtime. When Lynda began to wash Cody's hair, he began to whine and cry. Lynda said, "I know, you don't like your hair washed" and quickly finished.

When did Cody communicate?______________________________

Where did Cody communicate?______________________________

Why did Cody communicate?______________________________

How did Cody communicate?______________________________

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

Bringing it Home

Answer the following questions:

1. List three activities (or materials) that your child enjoys:

____

____

____

2. Think about the environmental strategies listed here:
   -forgetfulness
   -visible but reachable
   -violate expectations
   -sabotage
   -piece by piece

Choose one of the activities your child enjoys and describe how you can use one of the environmental strategies to encourage communication during that activity.

____

____

____

3. Think about the strategies for encouraging communication that we discussed:

   -mirroring
   -turn-taking
   -reflecting
   -expanding
   -self-talk
   -parallel talk

Choose another of your child's favorite activities and describe how you could use one of these strategies to encourage communication using one of these strategies:

____

PARTICIPANT'S PACKET

In a Nutshell

1. Your child communicates in many ways.

   How Your Child Communicates
   - a. whines/cries
   - b. reaches toward object
   - c. points to object
   - d. gives the object
   - e. uses gestures or sign language
   - f. shows a picture of the object
   - g. vocalizes
   - h. uses one word
   - I. Uses phrase or sentence

2. Your child also communicates for many reasons.

   Why Your Child Communicates
   - a. to request
   - b. to protest
   - c. to comment
   - d. to answer questions
   - e. to ask questions.

3. Your child communicates when and where he/she needs or wants to communicate. This can be early in the morning, in the afternoon or after dinner. It can be at home, at the Park, or while you are shopping. The best time to teach communication skills is when and where your child needs or wants to communicate.

4. The three steps to remember to encourage your child to communicate are:
   - a. WATCH - to see what your child is interested in and watch for signs that the child is communicating with you.
   - b. WAIT - don't talk or ask questions for a few moments to give your child a chance to initiate communication (at least 5 seconds).
   - c. FOLLOW YOUR CHILD'S LEAD - talk about and play with the materials that the child is interested in.

5. Some strategies for encouraging communication are:

   a. mirroring - imitate what your child says or does
   b. turn-taking - developing a pattern of conversation or behaviors in which you and your child alternate saying things
   c. reflecting - encouraging your child's attempt to communicate by repeating them back to him
   d. expanding - reflecting back what your child says and adding words to it to encourage new concepts or more elaborate sentence structure
   e. self-talk - talking about what you are doing, thinking, or feeling
   f. parallel talk - talking about what you are doing, thinking, or feeling.

6. Environmental strategies for encouraging communication involve arranging the setting or materials you and your child are using to make it more likely that your child will need to or want to communicate. Some of these strategies are:

   a. forgetfulness - purposefully "forgetting" to provide everything that is needed for an activity
   b. visible by unreachable - placing an object that your child needs or wants out of his reach, but still within sight
   c. violate expectations or sabotage - doing something silly, such as trying to put a doll's shoe on your child's foot, or interfering with an activity
   d. piece by piece - holding back pieces of toys or foods to encourage your child to ask for them

7. Incidental teaching involves setting up the environment then following these steps to prompt the appropriate communication.

   a. Set up the environment
   b. Wait 5 seconds with an expectant expression on your face
   c. If your child does not respond, ask a question or make an open-ended statement
   d. If your child does not respond, repeat or rephrase question or statement.
   e. If your child does not respond, tell your child what to say.
   f. If your child does not respond, say the appropriate response and give the desired object.

SUPPLEMENTAL HANDOUTS

Picture and Exchange System

WHAT IS A PICTURE EXCHANGE SYSTEM?

The Picture Exchange System was developed by L.F. Ryan and A.S. Bondy at the Delaware Autistic Program. With this program, a child is taught to get the attention of the person she wants to communicate with and hand him a picture to get her message across. The pictures can be used to make requests, to comment and to answer questions. The pictures are handed to the person the child is communicating with because it is more interactive than having the child point to the pictures. Also, if the child points to pictures without first getting the person's attention, her attempt to communicate may fail. Children also seem to be more able to grasp and hand a picture than to isolate one finger to point to a picture.

PICTURE EXCHANGE VS. SIGN LANGUAGE

Many preschool programs use a Total Communication approach that includes sign language to teach communication skills. Sign language can be an appropriate communication system, but there are a few factors that make it difficult to teach to young children. First, teachers, parents, and caregivers should be fairly fluent in the use of sign language in order to teach children to use it. As with any foreign language, if a child is not in an environment in which sign language is used consistently it is difficult for him to learn to use it. It is also difficult for adults to continue to use the sign language if they are not getting much feedback from their child. Young children may also lack the motor coordination to make some of the signs. Finally, the use of sign language with the child's friends, extended family members and others in the community is difficult because most of these people do not sign and do not understand sign language. Most people do, however, understand what a picture means.

Step by Step

Following are the steps to follow to begin use of the Picture Exchange System:

Step 1 - Choose Reinforcing Items

Make a list of items that are highly reinforcing to your child. These items may include certain toys, foods, activities or other objects that your child enjoys. Remember items that are reinforcing to your child may change frequently, so you may need to come back to this step periodically. Work together with the preschool staff on this step to make sure that everyone is working with similar pictures.

Step 2 - Make Grid and Pictures

A. Find pictures of the items on your list. LEAP staff use the Mayer-Johnson Picture Communication Symbols and can copy these for you. Here are some examples of these pictures:

B. Paste the pictures to thin cardboard (file folder thickness).

C. Cut out pictures.

D. Cover picture with clear contact paper.

E. The LEAP Staff can also make you a copy of the grid which can be used to make the communication board. This grid (reduced in size) looks like this:

This grid can be glued to a file folder and covered with clear contact paper.

F. You may also want to make these two pictures that are commonly added to each child's communication board:

G. On the back of each picture, place a ½ inch square piece of the fuzzy velcro.

H. On each square on the grid, place a ½ inch square piece of the rough velcro.

Step 3 - Teach the Exchange

A. During an everyday home activity, place one of the items from your list so that your child can see the item, but cannot get to it. You can do this by placing it out of reach or by blocking your child so that he cannot get the item.

B. Place only the picture of that item on the grid.

C. Physically help your child hand you the picture by placing your hand over this hand, removing the picture from the communication board and placing it in your other hand.

D. Say something such as, "You want the ball." or "Ball? Here it is."

E. Give the item to your child.

F. Place the picture back on the communication board in a different place.

Use no verbal prompts at this time. This is so that the communication is initiated by your child. It is very natural at this point to say, "What to you want?", but this would make your child's communication an answer to a question rather than a request that he initiates. It is best to use more physical assistance and gestures along with an expectant facial expression to show your child that you expect him to communicate with you. You should not say, "Give me the picture."

Gradually reduce the amount of physical assistance, gestures, and environmental cues you are giving your child. Here are some steps you can follow to reduce this assistance:

A. Reduce the physical assistance so your child releases the picture into your hand without assistance.

B. Guide your child in removing the picture from the communication board and handing it to you by touching his wrist or arm or pointing to the picture and/or your hand.

C. Increase the distance between your child and the picture so he needs to move toward the picture to initiate the request.

D. Increase the distance between you and your child so that he needs to move toward you or find you to give you the picture.

Repeat this entire procedure with several different pictures, always with only one picture on the board at a time, before moving on to the next step.

Teach Discriminations

Once your child can give the single picture for several different items, you can begin to teach her to choose what she wants from two pictures on the communication board. The two pictures should be as different as possible with one picture being a desired items and the other being uninteresting or undesired. For example, you could have a picture of a food and a towel, or a dish and a crayon on the communication board.

Again, you should set up the communication board during an everyday home activity. I your child chooses a picture of something that is not available, you can say, "We don't have that right now." Then wait for your child to pick up the correct picture. Use physical assistance and gesture as necessary, but sparingly. You can point to the correct picture or partially cover the incorrect picture with your hand.

As with Step 3, place the pictures back on the communication board in different places so your child will need to scan and locate the picture, rather than memorizing where the pictures are placed.

As your child learns this discrimination, gradually increase the number of pictures on the board. As the number of pictures increases, you may want to consider moving the pictures into a communication book and teaching your child to open the book and turn the pages to find the pictures.

Begin right away to teach your child to use this communication system with different people. As your child improves in the use of this system, encourage your child to use the pictures with siblings, extended family, friends, and neighbors.

Step 5 - Teach Sentence Use

To begin to teach sentence use, you need to make a new, small grid. This grid is a strip with just 3 or 4 spaces like this. In the first space on the strip, place the picture for "I want:"

When your child initiates a request, you can physically prompt her to place the picture on the sentence strip, then hand the strip to you. You would then say (as if you are reading the message), "I want cookie" and give your child what she requested. When your child is ready, you can teach her to place both the "I want" picture and the picture of what she is requesting on the strip.

Step 6 - Teach Responding to Questions and Commenting

Once your child is consistently using the Picture Exchange to initiate requests, he can be taught to respond to questions and make comments. You can concentrate on teaching your child to respond "yes" and "no" questions with pictures, if needed.

You can also begin to ask your child concrete questions (when you know the answers) about things he did such as, "What did you have for snack?" or "What did you see at the zoo?"

To teach commenting, pictures for "I see a ..." and "I have a ..." Can be added to the sentence strip. You can model how to use these comments during play time or other daily activities by saying "I see a house" or "I have a popsicle" and prompting your child to respond. As mentioned before, use an expectant facial expression or gesture to prompt your child.

THE LEAP OUTREACH PROJECT